THE PRETENDER

ROBERT W. SERVICE

Ann H. B. Shepherd.
Morning ton.
Abernethy
1925.

THE PRETENDER

NOVELS BY

ROBERT W. SERVICE

THE POISONED PARADISE
THE ROUGH-NECK
THE TRAIL OF '98
THE PRETENDER

POEMS BY

ROBERT W. SERVICE

SONGS OF A SOURDOUGH
BALLADS OF A CHEECHAKO
RHYMES OF A ROLLING STONE
THE RHYMES OF A RED-CROSS MAN
BALLADS OF A BOHEMIAN

T. FISHER UNWIN LIMITED, LONDON

THE PRETENDER

BY

ROBERT W. SERVICE

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THE PRETENDER

BOOK I—THE CHALLENGE

CHAPTER I

THE HAPPIEST YOUNG MAN IN MANHATTAN

To have omnibus tastes and an automobile income —how ironic !

With this reflexion I let myself collapse into a padded chair of transcendent comfort, lit a cigarette and inspected once more the amazing bank-book. Since I had seen it last several credit entries had been made—over twenty thousand dollars ; and in the meantime, dawdling and dreaming in the woods of Maine, all I had managed to squander was a paltry thousand. Being a man of imagination I sought for a simile. As I sat there by the favourite window of my favourite club I could see great snowflakes falling in the quiet square, and at that moment it seemed to me that I too was standing under a snowfall, a snowfall of dollars steadily banking me about.

For a moment I revelled in the charming vision, then like a flash it changed. Now I could see two figures locked in Homeric combat. Like a serene over-soul I watched them, I, philosopher, life-critic ; for was not one of them James H. Madden, man of affairs, the other, J. Horace Madden, dilettante and dreamer. . . . Look ! from that clutter of stale snow a form springs triumphant.

Hurrah! It is the near-poet, the man on the side of the angels.—And so rejoiced was I at this issue that I regarded the little bank-book almost resentfully.

"Figures, figures," I sighed, "what do you mean to me? Crabbed symbols on a smudgy page! Can you buy for me that fresh Spring-morning feeling in the brain, that rapture of a fine thing finely done? Ah no! the luxury you spell means care and worry. In comfort is contentment. And am I not content? Nay! in all Manhattan is there man more happy? Young, famous, free —could life possibly be more charming? And so in my tower of tranquillity let me work and dream; and every now and then, little book, your totals will grow absurd, and I will look at you and say: 'Figures, figures, what do you mean to me?'"

"But, after all," I went on to reflect, "money is not so utterly a nuisance. Pleasant indeed to think that when most are pondering over the problem of the permanent meal-ticket, you are yourself well settled on the sunny side of Easy Street. Poets have piped of Arcady, have chorused of Bohemia, have expressed their enthusiasm for Elysian fields, but who has come to chant the praise of Easy Street? Yet, surely, it is the kindliest of all? Behind its smiling windows are no maddening constraints, no irking servitudes, no tyranny of time. Just sunshine, laughter, mockery of masters—Oh, a thousand times blessed, golden, glorious Easy Street!"

Here I lighted a fresh cigarette and settled more snugly in that chair of kingly comfort.

"Behold in me," I continued lazily, "a being specially favoured of the gods. Born if not with a silver spoon in my mouth at least with one of a genteel quality of nickel, blest with a boyhood notably cheering and serene, granted while still in my teens succeess that others fight for to the

grave's edge, untouched by a single sorrow, unthwarted by a solitary defeat—does it not seem as if my path in life had been ever preceded by an Olympian steam roller macadamising the way?"

"True, as to appearance, the gods have failed to flatter me. If you, gentle reader, who are as perfect as the Apollo Belvedere, gaze at your chiselled features in the silver side of your morning tea-pot, you will get a good idea of mine. But there—I refer you to a copy of *Wisdom for Women*, the well-known feminist Weekly. It contains an illustrated interview, one of that celebrated series, *Lions in their Dens*. Hearken unto this:

> "A tall, tight-lipped young man, eager, yet abstracted; eyes quizzical, mouth a straight line, brow of a dreamer, chin of a flirtatious stock-broker. His gleaming glasses suggest the journalist, his prominent nose the tank-town tragedian. Add to that that he has a complexion unæsthetically sanguine, and that his flaxen hair, receding from his forehead, gives him a fictitious look of intellectuality, and you have a combination easier to describe than to imagine. . . ."

What a blessing it is we cannot see ourselves as others see us! How it would fill life with intolerable veracities! Dear lady who wrote the above, I can forgive you for the Roman nose, for the flirtatious chin, nay, even for the fictitious intellectuality of my noble brow, but for one thing I can never think of you with joy. You wrote of me that I was "a mould of fashion and a glass of form." Since then, alas! I have been compelled to live up to your description. Bohemian to the backbone, lover of the flannel suit of freedom and the silken shirt of ease, how I have suffered in such clutch of *comme il faut* no tongue can tell. Yet

thanks to a Fifth Avenue tailor even a little sartorial success has fallen to my lot."

Success! Some men seem to have a magic power of attracting it, and I think I must be one. Sitting there in the window of the club, as I watched the shadows steal into the square, and the snow thicken to a fluttering curtain, I positively purred with satisfaction. Behind me the silent library was lit only by a fire of glowing coals. The jocund light gleamed on the carved oak of the book-cases, and each diamond pane winked jovially. Yet, cheerful though it was, my thoughts were far more rosy.

But now my reverie was being broken. Two men were approaching, and by their voices I knew them to be Quince the critic and Vaine the poet. The first was a representative of the School of Suds, the second an exponent of the School of Sediment; but as neither were included in the number of my more intimate enemies I did not turn to greet them.

Goring Quince is a stall-fed man with a purple face, cotton-coloured hair and supercilious eyebrows. He is an incubator of epigrams. His articles are riots of rhetoric, and it is marvellous how completely he can drown a poor little idea in a vat of verbiage.

Herrick Vaine is a puffy, pimply person, with a mincing manner and an emasculated voice. He might have been a poet of note but for two things: while reading his work you always have a feeling that you have seen something oddly like it before; and after you have read it all you retain is a certain dark-brown taste on the mental palate. Otherwise he is all right.

And now, having described the principals, let me record the little dialogue to which I was the unseen listener.

VAINE (*with elaborate carelessness*): By the way, you haven't read my latest book, I suppose?

QUINCE (*cooingly*): Why, yes, my boy. I lost no time in reading it. I positively wallowed

—I mean revelled in it. Reminds me of Baudelaire in spots. Without you and a chosen few what would literature be?

VAINE (*enraptured*): How lovely of you to say so. You know I value your opinion more than any in the world.

QUINCE (*waving his gold-rimmed eyeglasses*): Not at all. Merely my duty as a watchdog of letters. Yes, I thought your *Songs Saturnalian* in a class by itself; but now I can say without being accused of a lapse of literary judgment that your *Poems Plutonian* marks a distinct epoch in modern poetry. There is an undefinable *something* in your work, a *je ne sais quoi* . . . you know.

VAINE: Yes; thank you, thank you.

QUINCE: Is it selling, by the way?

VAINE: Thank heaven, no! How banal! Popular success would imply artistic failure. To the public true art must always be inaccessible. If ever I find my work becoming bourgeois, it will be because I have committed artistic suicide. On my bended knees I pray to be delivered from popularity.

QUINCE: I see. You prefer the award of posterity to the reward of prosperity. Well, no doubt time will bring you your meed of recognition. In the meantime give me a copy of the poems, and I will review it in next week's *Compass*.

VAINE: Will you indeed. That honour alone will repay me for writing it. By the way, I imagine I saw a copy in the library. Let me look.

(As Vaine had put it there himself his doubt seemed a little superfluous. He switched on a light, and from the ranked preciosity of a certain shelf he selected a slim, gilt volume.)

VAINE: *Poems Plutonian.*

QUINCE (*taking it in his fat, soft hands*): How utterly exquisite! What charming generosity of margin!

VAINE: Yes; you know the great fault of books, to my mind, is that they contain printed matter. Some day I dream of writing a book that shall be nearly all margin, a book from which the crudely obvious shall be eliminated, a book of exquisite intrusion, of supreme suggestion, where magic words like rosaries of pearls shall glimmer down the pages. I really think that books are the curse of literature. If every writer were compelled to grave his works on brass and copper from how much that is vain and vapid would we not be delivered?

QUINCE: Ah, yes! Still books have their advantages. Here, for example, am I going to burn the incense of a cigar before the putrescent—I mean the iridescent altar of art. Now if *Poems Plutonian* were inscribed on brass or stone I confess I should hesitate. What are those things?

(He pointed to a separate shelf on which stood nine volumes with somewhat aggessive covers.)

VAINE: Well may you ask. Brazen strumpets who have stumbled into the temple of Apollo. These, my dear sir, are the so-called novels of Norman Dane. You see, as a member of the club, he is supposed to give the library a copy of his books. We all hoped he wouldn't, but he came egregiously forward. Of course we couldn't refuse the monstrous things.

QUINCE: No, I understand. What's this? *The Yellow Streak:* Two hundred thousand! *The Dipsomaniac:* Sixth Edition!! *Rattlesnake*

Ranch: Tenth Impression!!! Why, what a disgusting lot of money the man must be making!

VAINE: Yes, the Indiana Idol, the Boy Best-sellermonger. A perfect bounder as regards Art. But he knows how to truckle to the mob. His books sell by the ton. They're so bad, they're almost good.

QUINCE (*with surprising feeling*): There I don't agree with you. He doesn't even know how to please the public. It takes a clever man to do that, and Norman Dane is only a dry-goods clerk spoiled. No, the point is—he is the public, the apotheosis of the vulgar intelligence. Don't think for a moment he is writing down to the level of the mob. He charms the great half-educated because he himself belongs to them. He can't help it.

VAINE: Yes, but there are so many plebeian novelists. How do you account for Dane's spectacular success?

QUINCE: A fool's luck! He happened to hit the psychological moment. When he leaped into the lists with *The Haunted Taxi-cab* taxis had just come out, and at the same moment there was a mania for mystery stories. Take two popular *motifs*, mix recklessly, spice with sentiment and sauce with sensation—there you have the recipe of a bestseller. His book fluked into favour. His publishers put their weight behind it. In a month he found himself famous from Maine to Mexico. But he couldn't do it again; no, not in a thousand years. What has he done since? Live on his name. Step cunningly in his tracks. Bah! I tell you Norman Dane's an upstart, a faker; to the very heart of him a shallow, ignorant pretender. . . .

Whatever else the poor chap might be was lost in the distance as the two men moved away. For a long time after they had gone I did not stir. The fluttering snow-butterflies seemed to have become great moths, that hovered in the radiance of the nearest arc-light and dashed to a watery doom. Pensively I gazed into that greenish glamour, pulling at a burnt-out cigarette.

At last I rose, and going to the book-case regarded the nine volumes of flambuoyant isolation.

"An upstart," I sighed softly; "A faker, a pretender. . . ."

And to tell the truth I was sorely taken aback: for you see in my hours of industry I am a maker of books and my pen name is Norman Dane.

CHAPTER II

THE SHEEP AND THE GOATS

WHETHER or not a sense of humour is an attribute of the Divine, I am too ignorant of theology to conjecture ; but I am sure that as a sustaining power amid the tribulations of life it is one of the blessedest of dispensations.

For a moment, I must confess, the words of Quince and Vaine stung me to resentment. Being one of those people who think in moving pictures, I had a gratifying vision in which I was clutching them savagely and knocking their heads together. Then the whole thing struck me on the funny side, and a little page boy, entering to turn on the lights, must have been amazed to hear me burst into sudden laughter.

So that presently, as Mr. Quince, having spilt some cigar ash over the still uncut leaves of *Poems Plutonian*, was arising to daintly dust the volume, I approached him with a bright and happy smile.

" Hullo, Quince," I began, cheerily.

He looked up. His eyes gleamed frosty interrogation, and his clipped grey moustache seemed to bristle in his purple face.

" What is it ? " he grunted.

" It's about that matter we spoke of this morning. You know I've been thinking it over, and I've decided to go on that note of yours."

Quince was astonished. He was also overjoyed ; but his manner was elaborately off-hand.

" Ah ! Thanks awfully, Madden. Only a matter of renewal, you know. Old endorser went off to Europe, and the bank got after me. Well, you'll go on the note, then ? "

"Yes, on one condition."

"Hum! Condition! What?" he demanded anxiously.

"Well," I said. "I believe one good turn deserves another. Now I was down at the bank this morning, and I know you're in rather a hole about that renewal. Backers for thousand dollar notes aren't picked up so easily. However, I'm willing to go on it if you'll"—here I paused deliberately—"give my last book a good write-up in your next *Compass causerie.*"

His face fell. "I'm afraid—you see, I've promised Vaine——"

"Oh, hang Vaine! Sidetrack him."

"But—there's the policy of the paper——"

"Oh, well, I'll buy a controlling interest, and alter your policy. But, as a matter of fact, you know they'll print anything over your name."

"Yes—well, there are my own standards, the ideals I have fought for——"

"Rot! Look here, Quince, let's be honest. We're both in the writing game for what we can get out of it. We may strut and brag; but we know in our hearts there's none of us of much account. . . . Why, show me half a dozen writers of to-day, man, who'll be remembered twenty years after they're dead?"

"I protest——"

"You know it's true. We're bagmen in a negligible day. Now, I don't want you to alter your standards; all I want of you is to adjust them. You know that as soon as you see a book of mine coming along you get your knife out. You've flayed me from the start. You do it on principle. You've got regular formulas of abuse. My characters are sticks, my plots chaotic, my incidents melodramatic. You judge my work by your academic standards. Don't do that. Don't judge it as art—judge it as entertainment. Does it entertain?"

"Possibly it does—the average, unthinking man."

"Precisely. He's my audience. My business is to amuse him, to take him outside of himself for an hour or two."

"It's your duty to elevate his taste."

"Fiddlesticks! my dear chap. I don't take myself so seriously as that. And, anyway, it's hopeless. If you don't give him the stuff he wants, he won't take any. You'll never educate the masses to anything higher than the satisfaction of their appetites. They want frenzied fiction, plot, action. The men want a good yarn, the women, sentiment, and we writers want—the money."

"It's a sad state of affairs, I admit."

"Well, then, admit that my books fill the bill. They're good yarns, they're exciting, they're healthy. Surely they don't deserve wholesale condemnation. So go home, my dear Quince, and begin a little screed like this:

> In the past we have frequently found occasion to deal severely with the novels of Norman Dane, and to regret that he refuses to use those high gifts he undoubtedly possesses; but on opening his latest novel, *The House of a Hundred Scandals*, we are agreeably surprised to note a decided awakening of artistic conscience.

And so on. No one knows how to do it better than you. Bring to the bank to-morrow a proof of the article, and I'll put my name on the back of your note."

"I—I don't know. I'll think it over. Perhaps I've been a little too dogmatic. Let me see—Literary Criticism and the Point of View—yes, I'll see what I can do."

As I left him ruefully brooding over the idea I felt suddenly ashamed of myself.

"Poor old chap!" I thought; "I've certainly taken a mean advantage of him. Perhaps, after all, he may be right and I wrong. I begin to

wonder: Have I earned success, or only achieved it? It seems to me this literary camp is divided into two bands, the sheep and the goats, and, sooner or later, a man must ask himself which he belongs to. Am I a sheep or am I a goat?"

But I quickly steeled myself. Why should I have compunction? Was I not in a land where money was the standard of success? Here then was the virtue of my bloated bank-book—Power. Let them sneer at me, these æsthetic apes, these flabby degenerates. There by the door was a group of them, and I ventured to bet that they were all in debt to their tailors. Yet they regarded me as an outsider, a barbarian. Looking around for some object to soothe my ruffled feelings, I espied the red, beefsteak-and-beer face of Porkinson, the broker. Here was a philistine, an unabashed disciple of the money god. I hailed him.

Over our second whiskey I told Porkinson of the affair in the library. He laughed a ruddy, rolling laugh.

"What do you care," he roared raucously. "You put the stuff over and grab the coin—that's the game, isn't it? Let those highbrow freaks knock you all they want—you've got away with the goods. And anyway, they've got the wrong dope. Why, I guess I'm just as level-headed as the next man, and I wouldn't give a cent for the piffle they turn out. When I'm running to catch a train I grab one of your books every time. I know if there's none of the boys on board to have a card game with I've got something to keep me from being tired between drinks. What I like about your yarns, old man, is that they keep me guessing all the time, and the fellow never gets the girl till the last page. I always skip a whole lot, I get so darned interested. I once read a book of yours clean through between breakfast and lunch."

Thanking Porkinson for his enthusiasm, which

somehow failed to elate me, I took the elevator up to my apartment on the tenth story of the club. Travers, the artist, had a studio adjoining me, and, seeing a light under his door, I knocked.

"Enter," called Travers.

He was a little frail old man, with a peaked, grey face framed in a plenitude of iron-grey hair, and ending in a white Vandyke beard. A nervous trouble made him twitch his right eye continually, sometimes emphasising his statements with curious effect. He believed he was one of the greatest painters in the world; yet that very day three of his best pictures had been refused by the Academy.

"I knew it," he cried excitedly; "I knew when I sent them they'd come back. It's happened for the last ten years. They know if they hung me I'd kill every one else in the room. They're afraid of my mountains." (A wink.) "Their little souls can't conceive of any scenery beyond Connecticut. But it's the last time I'll send." (A wink.) "I'll get recognition elsewhere, London, Paris; then when they want my pictures for their walls they'll have to come and beg, yes, beg for them." (A portentous wink.)

Every year he vowed the same thing; every year he canvassed the members of the hanging committee; every year his pictures came cruelly back; yet his faith in himself was invincible.

"I tell you what," I said; "you might be one of the popular painters of the day if you only looked at it right. Here you go painting straight scenery as it was in the days before Adam. You object to the least hint of humanity—a hut, a bridge, a boat. My dear sir, what the General Public wants is the human, the dramatic. There's that River Rapids picture you did two years ago, and it's still on your hands. Now that's good. That water's alive, it boils; as I look at it I can hear it roar, and feel the sting of the spray. But—it's

straight water, and the G.P. won't take its water straight. Now just paint two men in a birch-bark canoe going down these rapids. Paint in a big rock, call it *A Close Shave*, and you'll sell that picture like winking."

"Oh, I couldn't do that. You're talking like a tradesman."

"There's that sunset," I went on. "It's splendid. That colour seems to burn a hole in the canvas. But just you paint in a black cross against that smouldering sky, and see how it gives significance, aye, and poetry to the picture. Call it *The Lone Grave.*"

"But don't you see," said Travers, with some irritation. "I'm trying to express a mood of Nature. Surely there's enough poetry in Nature without trying to drag in lone graves?"

"Not for the G.P. You've got to give it sentiment. Did that millionaire brewer buy anything?"

Travers sighed rather woefully.

"No, he kept on asking me where my pictures *were*, and I kept on telling him they weren't anywhere, they were everywhere; they were in his own heart if he only looked deep enough. They were just moods of nature. He couldn't see it. I believe he bought an eight by ten canvas at Rosenheimer's Department Store: *Moses Smiting the Rock.*"

"There you are. He was getting more for his money. He wanted action, interest. Daresay he had the gush of water coloured to look like beer. But I'll tell you what I'll do—I'll give you five hundred for that thing you call *Morning Mist in the Valley.*"

"Sorry," said Travers, with a look of miserable hesitation; "I don't want to sell that. It's the best thing I've done. I want to leave it to the nation."

"All right. You know best. Good-night."

I knew I had offered more than the market value of the picture ; I knew that Travers had not sold a canvas for months ; I knew that he often ate only one meal a day, and that if he chose, he could paint commercial pictures ; so I could not but admire the little man who, in the face of scorn, neglect, starvation even, clung to his ideals and refused to prostitute his art. But this knowledge did not tend to restore my self-esteem, and it was in a mood of singular self-criticism I entered my room.

As I switched on the light the first thing I saw was my reflection in a large mirror. Long and grimly I gazed, hands in pockets, legs widespread, head drooping. I have often thought of that moment. It seemed as if the reflection I saw was other than myself, was, indeed, almost a stranger to me.

"Ha!" I cried, grimacing at the man in the mirror ; "You're getting found out, are you? Tell me, now, beneath your wrappings of selfishness and sham is there anything honest and essential? Is there a real *You*, such as might stand naked in the wind-swept spaces of eternity? Or are you, down to your very soul's depths a player of parts?"

Then my mood changed, and I savagely paced the room.

"Oh, the fools! The hypocrites! Can't they see that I am cleverer than they? Can't they see that I could write their futile sonnets, their fatuous odes? But if I did, wouldn't I starve? Am I to be blamed if I refuse? It's all right to starve if one's doing immortal work ; but not six men in the world to-day are doing that. We're ephemera. Our stuff serves the moment. Take then the cash, and let the credit go."

I took off my boots, and threw them viciously into a corner.

"How Quince upset me to-night! So I made a chance hit with my first book? Well, it's true

the public were up on their toes for it. But then I would have succeeded anyway. As to catering to the mass—I admit it. I'm between the devil and the deep sea. The publishers keep rushing me for the sort of thing that will sell, and the million Porkinsons keep clamouring for the sort of thing they can read without having to think. For the sake of his theoretical wife and six children, what can a poor devil do but commercialise his ideals ?"

Here I paused thoughtfully, with one arm out of my coat.

"After all, is a book of fiction not entertainment just as much as a play ? There's your audience, the public. You've got to try and please them, to be entertaining from cover to cover. Better be immoral than be dull. And when it comes to audiences, give me a big one of just plain 'folks,' to a small one of highbrows."

With knitted brows and lips pursed doubtfully, I proceeded to wind up my watch.

"Anyway, I haven't written for money ; I've written for popularity. It's nice to think you can get on a train and find someone reading your books—even if it's only the nigger porter. True, my popularity has meant about twenty-five thousand a year to me ; but it's not my fault if my publishers insist on paying me such big royalties. And I've not spent the money. I've gone on living on my private income. Then the writing itself has been such a distraction. Lord ! how I have enjoyed it ! Granted that my notion of Hades would be to be condemned to read my own books, yet, such as they are, I've done my best with them. I've lived them as I wrote. I've laughed with joy at their humour. I've shed real tears (with just as much joy) at their pathos."

I gave a wrench at my collar, expressive of savage perplexity ; on which the stud shot out, and, cheerfully proceeded to roll under the wardrobe.

"Perhaps I've done things I shouldn't? I've made coincidence work overtime; I've grafted on love scenes so that the artist could get in one or two 'clinch pictures.' On my last page you'll find the heroine clutched to the hero's waistcoat; but—they all do it. One's got to, or get out of the game."

Here I disappeared for a moment; and when I re-entered, clad in pale blue pyjamas, I was calm and cheerful again.

"So old Quince said I'd succeeded by a fluke. Well, I'd just like to bet my year's income against his that I could make a fresh start and do the same thing all over again. By Jove! What an idea! Why not? Go away to London, cut adrift from friends and funds, fight my way up the ladder from the very bottom. After all, I've had the devil's own luck, everything in my favour. It's hardly been a fair test. Perhaps I really am a four-flusher. Even now I begin to doubt myself. It seems like a challenge."

Switching off the light I jumped into bed.

"Life's too appallingly prosy. Here for seven years I've been imagining romance; it's time I tried to live it a little. Yes, I'll go to-morrow. . . . London . . . garret . . . poverty . . . struggle . . . triumph . . ."

And at this point anyone caring to listen at my door might have heard issuing from these soft blankets a sound resembling the intermittent harshness of a buzz-saw going through cordwood.

CHAPTER III

GRILLED KIDNEY AND BACON

I WAS awakened at eight o'clock by the alarm in my watch, and lay a few minutes debating whether or not I should rise. I have always rebelled against the convention that makes us go to bed at night and get up in the morning. How much less primitive to go to bed in the morning and get up at night! But in either case we should abhor crude and violent awakenings. We should awake rhythmically, on pulsing, ripples of consciousness. Personally I should like to be awakened by gentle music, viols and harps playing soft strains of half-forgotten melodies. I should like to be roused by the breath of violets, to open my eyes to a vista of still lake on which float swans whiter than ivory.

What I did open my eyes to was a vista of shivery sunshine, steely blue sky, and snow on the roofs of the neighbouring sky-scrapers. I was indeed comfortable. Outside the heat-zone of my body the sheets were of a delectable coolness, and from head to heel I felt as if I were dissolving in some exquisite oil of ease.

Lying there enjoying that ineffable tranquillity, I subjected myself to my morning diagnosis. My soul is, I consider, a dark continent which it is my life's business to explore. This morning, then, in my capacity of explorer, I started even as Crusoe must have done when he saw the naked footprint in the sand. Extraordinary phenomenon! I had actually awakened of the same mind as that in which I fell asleep.

Propping myself up I lit a cigarette.

"Well, young fellow," I greeted my face in the

mirror, "so we're still doubtful of ourself? Want to make fresh start, go to London and starve in garret as per romantic formula? What foolishness! But let's be thankful for folly. Some day we'll be wise, and life will seem so worn and stale and grey. So here's for London."

With that I sprang up and disappeared into the bathroom, from which you might have heard a series of grunts and groans as of someone violently dumb-belling; then a series of snorts and splutters as of someone splashing in icy water; then the hissing noise one usually associates with the rubbing down of horses. After all of which, in a pink glow and a Turkish bath-robe, appeared a radiant young man.

Taking down the receiver of my telephone I listened for a moment.

"Yes, it's me, Miss Devereux. Give me the dining room, please. . . . Dining room? . . . Yes, it's Mr. Madden speaking. I want to order breakfast. . . . No, not grape-fruit, I said *breakfast* —Grilled kidney and bacon, toast and Ceylon tea. That's all, thank you."

In parenthesis I may say I do my best work on kidney and bacon. There is, I find, a remarkable affinity between what I eat and what I write. Before tackling a scene of blood I indulge in a slab of beef-steak, extra rare; for tender sentiment I find there is nothing like a previous debauch on angel cake and orange pekoe; while if I have to kill anyone I usually prime myself with coffee and caviare sandwiches. But as far as ordinary narrative is concerned I find kidney and bacon an excellent stimulus.

"How extremely agreeable this life is," I reflected as I resumed dressing. "No care, no responsibility, neither jolt nor jar in the machinery. It's almost too pleasant to be natural. Now, if I had a house, servants, a wife, the trouble would just be beginning at this time. As it is everything

conspires to save me from friction. But it'll soon be all over. I never quite realised that. My last day of gilded ease. To-day a young man of fashion in a New York club, to-morrow a skulking tramp in the steerage of an ocean liner. Yes, I'll go in the steerage."

Perhaps it was to heighten the contrast that I dressed with unusual care. From a score of lounging suits I selected a soft one of slatey grey; shirt, tie and socks to match; cuff-links of antique silver, and a scarf-pin of a pearl clutched in a silver claw; a hat of grey velour, and shoes with grey cloth uppers. Thus panoplied I sallied forth, a very symphony in grey.

At this early hour the dining room was empty, and three girls flew to wait on me. For the first time it struck me as being odd. Surely, I thought, if things were as they should be, woman would not be waiting on man. Here am I, a strong, healthy brute of a male, lolling back like a lord, while these frail females fly like slaves to fulfil my desires. Yet I work three hours a day, they ten. I am rich, they painfully poor. There's something all wrong with the world; but we're so used to looking at wrong we've come to think it right.

A strange spirit of dissatisfaction was stirring in me, of desire to see life from the other side. As I took my breakfast I studied the girls, trying to imagine what they thought, how they lived. Although there were no other members in the dining-room at that moment, each waitress was obliged to remain at her post. How deadly monotonous, standing there at attention! How tired they must be by the end of the day! Then I noticed that one of them, under cover of her apron, was taking surreptitious peeps at a yellow-covered book. At that moment the lynx-eyed lady superintendent entered, caught her in the act, and proceeded to rate her soundly. I hate scenes of any kind, and this

particularly pained me, for I saw that the all-too-tempting volume was a cheap edition of *The Haunted Taxicab.*

Then that moving picture imagination of mine began to flicker. The girl had gone from the room with tears in her eyes. Surely, thought I, she has been dismissed. A blur came between me and my plate and the film unreeled. . . .

Ah! I see her trying to get other employment, failing again and again, sinking deeper into the mire of misery and despair. Then at last the time comes when the brave, proud heart is broken; the proud, sweet eyes flinch at another day of bitterness and failure. They recognise, they accept the end.

It is a freezing night of mid-winter, and I am walking down Broadway. Suddenly I am accosted by a girl with a hard, painted face, a girl who smiles the forced smile of fallen womanhood.

"Silvia!" I gasp.

She shrinks from me. "You!" she cries. "The author of my ruin; you, whose book I was dismissed for reading, unable to resist peering into the pages you had invested with such fatally fascinating charm. . . ."

As the scene came up before me tears filled my eyes, and fearful that they might drop on my kidney and bacon I averted my head. At the same moment the waitress came back with a saucy giggle and resumed her post. I was somewhat dashed, nevertheless I decided it would do for a short story, and taking out my idea book I noted it down.

"Now," I said, "Let's see the morning paper. . . How lucky! The *Gargantuan* sails to-morrow, I'll just catch her. Splendid!"

That histrionic temperament of mine began to thrill. Had not my whole life been dominated by my dramatic conception of myself? Student, actor, cowboy, I had played half a dozen parts, and into each I had put my whole heart. Here,

then, was a new one: let me realise it quickly. So taken was I with the idea that I, who had never in my life known what it was to want a hundred dollars, retired to the reading-room, and, inspired by the kidney and bacon, took out a little gold pencil, and with it dinted in my idea book the following sonnet:

TO LITERATURE.

I, a poor, passion-goaded garreteer,
A pensive enervate of book and pen,
Who, in the bannered triumph-march of men
Lag like a sorry starvling in the rear—
Shall I not curse thee, mistress mine? I peer
Up from life's saturnalia, and then
Shrink back a-shudder to my garret den,
Seeing no prospect of a glass of beer.

What have I suffered, Siren, for thy sake!
What scorn endured, what happiness foregone!
What weariness and woe! What cruel ache
Of failure 'mid a thousand vigils wan!
Yet do I shrine thee as each day I wake,
Wishing I had another shirt to pawn.

I smoked two large cigars over my sonnet before I finally got it straight. This in spite of the fact that I had a hundred and one other things to do. If the house had been burning I believe the firemen would have dragged me out muttering and puzzling over my sonnet. My rhymes bucked on me; and, though I had rounded up a likely bunch of words, I just couldn't get them into the corral. Finally, with more of perspiration than inspiration, the thing was done.

"Hullo, Madden!" said someone as I wrote the last line, and looking up I saw young Hadsley, a breezy cotillion leader, who had recently been admitted into his father's law firm.

"Rotten nuisance, this early snow," went on Hadsley. "Mucks things up so. 'Fraid it'll spoil the game on Saturday."

"I hope not," I replied fervently. The game was the Yale-Princeton football match, and I was terribly eager to see my old college win.

"By the way," suggested Hadsley, "If you care to go I'll run you down on my car."

"Of course, I'd like it," I exclaimed enthusiastically. "I'll be simply delighted." Then like a flash I remembered.

"Oh, no! After all I'm sorry, I can't. I expect to be in mid-ocean by Saturday."

"Ah indeed! That sounds interesting. Going to Europe! Wish I was. When do you start?"

"To-morrow on the *Gargantuan*."

"You don't say! Why, the Chumley Graces are going on her. Of course, you remember the three girls—awfully jolly, play golf divinely, used to be called the Three Graces? They're so peaked they're missing the game, but the old man won't stay for it. They're taking their car and going to tour Europe. How nice for you! You'll have no end of a good time going over."

Malediction! Could I never out-pace prosperity? Could I never throw off the yoke of fortune?

"Oh, well, it's not settled yet," I went on quickly. "I may not be able to make it for to-morrow. I may have to take a later boat. So don't say anything about it, there's a good fellow."

"Oh, all right. The surprise will be all the jollier when they see you. Well, good-bye old man, and good luck. You'll get the news of the game by wireless. Gee! I wish I was in your shoes."

Hadsley was off, leaving me gnawing at an imaginary moustache. "The Chumley Graces going on the *Gargantuan*. That means I can never go steerage, and I have set my heart on going steerage. Let's see the paper again. Hurrah! There's an Italian steamer sailing to-morrow morning. Well, that'll do."

I was now in a whirlwind of energy, packing and

making final arrangements. At the steamship office, when I asked for a ticket, the clerk beamed on me.

"Yes, sir, we can give you a nice suite on the main deck, the best we have on the boat. Lucky it's not taken."

My moral courage almost failed me. "No, no!" I said hastily. "It's not for me. It's for one of my servants whose way I'm paying back to Italy. Give me a steerage ticket."

"Coward! Coward!" hissed Conscience in my ear. "You're making a bad beginning."

Just before lunch I remembered my business with Quince, and, jumping into a taxi, whisked down to the Bank. The manager received me effusively. The note was prepared—only wanted a satisfactory endorser. I scratched my name on the back of it, then, speaking into the telephone on the manager's desk, I got Quince on the line.

"Hullo! This is Madden speaking. I say, Quince, I have fixed up that note for you."

(A confused murmur that might be construed as thanks.)

"And about that article, never mind. I find I won't need it."

(Another confused murmur that might be construed as relief.)

"No, I've come to the conclusion you're right. The book's not the right stuff. If you praised it you'd probably have a hard time getting square with your conscience. So we'll let it go at that. Good-bye."

Then I slammed the receiver on the hook, feeling that I had gained more than I had lost.

By three o'clock everything had been done that could be done. I was on the point of giving a sigh of relief, when all at once I remembered two farewell calls I really ought to make.

"I'd almost forgotten them," I said. "I must say good-bye to Mrs. Fitz and Miss Tevandale."

CHAPTER IV

AN UNINTENTIONAL PHILANDERER

To believe a woman who tells you her age is twenty-nine is to show a naïve confidence in her veracity. Twenty-nine is an almost impossible age. No woman is twenty-nine for more than one year, yet by a process of elasticity it is often made to extend over half a dozen. True, the following years are insolent, unworthy of acknowledgment, best punished by being haughtily ignored. For to rest on twenty-nine as long as she dare is every woman's right.

Mrs. Fitzbarrington had been twenty-nine for four or five years, but if she had said thirty-nine, no one would have expressed particular surprise. However, there were reasons. Captain Fitzbarrington, who was in receipt of a monthly allowance, had been engaged for some years in a book entitled *The Beers of America*, the experimental investigations for which absorbed the greater part of his income. Mrs. Fitz, then, had a hard time of it, and it was wonderful how she managed to dress so well and keep on smiling.

She received me in the rather faded drawing-room of the house in Haarlem. She herself was rather faded, with pale, sentimental eyes, and a complex complexion. How pathetic is the woman of thirty, who, feeling youth with all that it means slipping away from her, makes a last frantic fight to retain it! Mrs. Fitz, on this occasion, was just a little more faded, a little more restored, a little more thirty-ninish than usual; and she welcomed me with a little more than her usual warmth.

"I'm so glad to see you," she said, giving me

both hands. "You know, I was just thinking of you."

This clearly called for a gallant reply, so I answered, "Ah! that must be telepathy, for you know I'm *always* thinking of you."

Yet I could have bitten my tongue as soon as I heard the last phrase slip from my mouth. There was a sudden catch in her breath; a soft light beaconed in her eyes. Confound the thing! why do the women we don't want to always take us seriously, and those we are serious with always persist in regarding us as a joke? I hastened to change the subject.

"Ah, how are the kiddies?"

The kiddies were Ronnie and Lonnie, two twin boys, very sticky and strenuous, whom in my heart I detested.

"The darlings! They're always so well. Heaven knows what I should do without them."

"And *he?*"

"Oh, he! I haven't seen him for three days, not since the remittance arrived, and then you can guess the state he was in."

"My poor friend! I'm so sorry." (How I hated my voice for vibrating as I said this, but for the life of me I could not help it. At such a moment tricks I had learnt in my short stage career came to me almost unconsciously.)

"Oh, don't pity me," she said. "You know a woman hates anyone who pities her."

"Then I mustn't make you hate me." (Again that infernal fighting-with-repressed feeling note.) "Well, you know you have my deepest sympathy," I added hastily.

She certainly had. My Irish heart melts at a tale of woe, or is roused to fiery wrath at the recital of a wrong. I feel far more keenly than the person concerned. Yet, alas! the moment after I am ready to laugh heartily with the next one.

"Yes, indeed, I know it," she spoke quickly. "It almost makes it worth while to suffer for that. You know how much it means to me, how much it helps, don't you?"

There was an awkward pause. She was waiting for me to take my cue, and I was staring at a mental sign-board, "Dangerous Ground." I tried to say, "Well, I'm glad," in a friendly way, but, to my infinite disgust, my voice broke. She caught the note, as of suppressed emotion. With wide eyes she looked at me as if she would read my soul; her flat bosom heaved, then suddenly she leaned forward and her voice was tense.

"Horace," she breathed, "do you love me?"

Now, when a female asks an unprotected male if he loves her there can be only two answers: Yes or No. If No, a scene follows in which he feels like a brute. If Yes, he saves her feelings and gives Time a chance to straighten things out. The situation is embarrassing and calls for delicate handling. I am sadly lacking in moral courage, and kindness of heart has always been my weakness. To say "No" would be to deal a deathblow to this woman's hope, to leave her crushed and broken, to drive her to despair, perhaps even to suicide. Besides—it would be awfully impolite.

"Perhaps I'd better humour her," I thought. So I too leaned forward, and in the same husky voice I answered, "Stella, how can you ask?"

"Cora," she corrected gently. I was rather taken aback. Yet I am not the first man who has called the lady of the moment by the name of her predecessor. It is one of life's embarrassing situations. However, I went on:

"Cora, how could you guess?"

"How does a woman know these things?" she answered passionately. "Could I not read it in your eyes alone?"

"Ah! my eyes—yes, my eyes . . ." Inwardly

I added, "Damn my eyes!" Then, after a pause in which I was conscious of her wide, bright, expectant regard I repeated lamely, "Ye—es, my eyes."

But she was evidently waiting for me to rise to the occasion. She leaned still further forward; then suddenly she laid her hands on mine.

"You mustn't kiss me," she said.

"Oh, no, I mustn't," I agreed hastily. I hadn't the slightest intention of doing it.

"No, no, that would ruin us. We must control ourselves. If Charley were to discover our secret he would kill me. Oh, I've known for long, so long that you loved me; but you were too fine, too honourable to show it. Now, what are we going to do? The situation is full of danger."

"Do!" I said glumly. "I don't know. It's beastly awkward." Then with an effort I cheered up. I tried to look at her with sad, stern eyes. I let my voice go down an octave.

"There's only one thing to do, Nora—I mean, Cora—only one thing: I must—go—away."

"No, no, not that," she cried.

"Yes, yes, I must; I must put the world between us. We must never meet again."

I could feel fresh courage in my heart, also the steerage ticket in my pocket. In a near-by mirror I had a glimpse of my face, and was pleased to see how it was stern and set. I was pleased to see also that she was looking at me as if I were a hero.

"Brave! Noble!" she whispered. "I knew it. Oh, I understand so well! It's for me you're doing this. How proud I am of you!"

Then, with my returning sense of safety, the dramatic instinct began to seethe in me. Apparently I had got out of the difficulty easily enough. Now to end things gracefully.

"Oh, what an irony life is!" I breathed.

" How happy we could have been, just we two in some garden of roses. Oh, if we were only free, free to fly to the ends of the earth together, to the heart of the desert, to the shadow of the pole —only together! Why did we meet like this, too late, too late?"

" Is it too late?" she panted, catching fire at my words. " Why should we let life cheat us of our joy? Take me away, darling, to some far, far land where no one will know us, where we can live, love, dream. What does it matter? There will be a ten days' scandal; he will get a divorce; all will soon be forgotten. Oh, take me away, sweetheart; take me away!"

By this time I was quite under the spell of my histrionic imagination. Here was a dramatic situation, and, though the heavens fall, I must work it out artistically. I threw caution to the winds and my arms around the lady.

" Yes," I cried, " Come with me. Come now, let us fly together. I want you; I need you; I cannot live without you. Make me the happiest man in the world. Let me live for you, just to adore you, to make your life one long, sweet dream of bliss."

These were phrases from one of my novels, and they slipped out almost unconsciously. Again in that convenient mirror I saw myself with parted lips and eyes agleam. " How well I'm doing this!" the artist in me applauded. " Ass! Ass!" hissed the critical overself. My attitude was a picture of passionate supplication, yet my whole heart was a prayer to the guardian that watches over fools.

" Oh, don't tempt me," she cried. " It's terrible! Yes, yes, I'll go now. Let's lose no time in case I weaken . . . at once. . . . I'll just get my hat and cloak. Wait a moment——"

She was gone. Horror of horrors! What

had I done? Here I was eloping with a woman for whom I did not care two pins. What mad folly had got into me? As I stared blankly at the door through which she had passed it seemed to be suddenly invested with all the properties of tragedy. Soon she would emerge from it clad for the flight, and—I must accompany her. Could I not escape? The window? But no, it was six stories high. By Heaven, I must go through with it! Let my life be ruined I must play the game. As I sat there, waiting for her to reappear, never in the history of eloping humanity was there man more miserable.

Then at last she came—Oh, merciful gods, without her hat!

"How can I tell you," she moaned. "Can you ever forgive me? My courage failed me. I couldn't bear to leave my children. There were their little photographs staring at me so reproachfully from the dressing-table. For their sakes I must stay and bear with him. After all, he is their father."

"Is he? I mean, of course he is." How my brain was reeling with joy! At that moment I loved the terrible twins with a great and lasting love.

"Forgive you, Flora," I said nobly, "There is nothing to forgive. I can only love you the more. You are right. Never must they think of their mother with the blush of shame. No, for their dear sakes we must each do our duty, though our hearts may break. I will go away, never to return. Yet, my dearest, I will always think of you as the noblest woman in the world."

"And I you too, dearest. You shall be my hero, and I shall adore you to the last day of my life. Now go, go quickly lest I weaken; and don't" (here she leaned closely to me), "don't kiss me—not even once. . ."

"No, I won't. It's hard, hard—but I won't. And listen, darling—if ever anything should happen to *him*, if at any time we should both find ourselves free, promise,-promise me you'll write to me. *I'll come to you though the whole world lies between us.* By my life, by my honour, I swear it."

"I promise," she said fervently. She looked as if she was going to weaken again, and I thought I had better get away quickly. A phrase from one of my novels came into my mind: "Here the brave voice broke."

"Good-bye," I cried. "Good-bye for ever. I shall never blame you, darling. Perhaps in another land I'll find my happiness again. Then some day, when we both are bent and grey, and sentiment lies buried under the frosts of time, we'll meet again, and, clasping hands, confess that all was for the best. And now, God bless you, Dora . . . for the last, last time, good-bye."

Here "the brave voice broke" beautifully; then slowly and with drooping head I made my exit from the room. Once in the street I drew a deep breath.

"To be over sympathetic is to be misunderstood." I sighed. "Well, I've given her a precious memory. Poor Mrs. Fitz!"

And, come to think of it, I had never kissed her, not even once.

* * * * *

Fifteen minutes later I had reached Riverside Drive, and was being shown into the luxurious apartment of Miss Boadicia Tevandale.

She was an orphan and an heiress, only child of Tevandale the big corporation lawyer, himself an author, whose *Tevandale on Torts* had almost as big a circulation as my *Haunted Taxicab*. Socially she moved in a more exalted sphere than I, but we had met at some of the less exclusive functions, and she had majestically annexed me.

Though her dearest enemy could not have called her "fat," there was just a suggestion of a suggestion that at sometime in the future she might possibly develop what might be described as an adipose approximation. At present she was merely "big."

I rather resent bigness in a woman. A female's first duty is to be feminine—to be small, dainty, helpless. I genuinely dislike holding a hand if it is larger than my own, and I can understand the feelings of Wainwright who poisoned his sister-in law because her thick ankles annoyed him. However, Boadicia had really been very nice to me. It would have been terribly rude on my part to have ignored her overtures of friendship. Consequently we had been seen much together, and had drifted into what the world regarded as a sentimental attachment. With my faculty, then, for entering into such situations, I was sometimes convinced that my feelings for her were those of real warmth. Indeed, once or twice, in moments of great enthusiasm, I almost suspected myself of being mildly in love with her.

She received me radiantly, and she, too, gave me both hands. On the third finger of the left one I noted the sparkle of a new diamond.

"Hello, stranger," she said, gaily. "Just in time for tea. It seems ages since I've seen you. Why haven't you been near me for a whole fortnight?"

I was going to make the usual excuses, when suddenly that devil of sentiment entered into me. So, trying to give my face a pinched look, I answered in a hollow voice:

"Can *you* ask that?"

She looked at me in surprise. "Why, Horace, what's the matter?"

"Oh, you women, you women!" I groaned bitterly.

"What do you mean?" she demanded, with some amazement.

"What do I mean? Are you blind? Have you no eyes as well as no heart? Can you not see how I have loved you this long, long while; loved you with a passion no tongue can tell? And now——"

I pointed dramatically to the new ring.

"Oh, *that!* Why, you don't mean to say——"

"I mean to say that after I read of your engagement in this morning's *Town Tattle* I went straight off and took a passage for Europe. I leave to-morrow. I've just come to say good-bye."

"Oh, I'm sorry, so sorry you feel that way about it. I never dreamed——"

"No, I have uttered no word, given no sign. How could I, knowing the difference in our social positions? Break, break my heart, but I must hold my tongue. So it seems I have kept my secret better even than I knew. But it does not matter now. I have no word of reproach. To-morrow I go, never to return. I pray you may be happy, very happy. And so, good-bye. . . ."

"Wait a moment! Good gracious!"

She laid a detaining hand on my arm, but I shook it off quite roughly, and strode to the window. My face was stern and set; my shoulders heaved with emotion. I had seen the leading man in our *Cruel Chicago* Company (in which I doubled the parts of the waiter and the policeman) use the same gesture with great effect.

"Why did I ever meet you?" I said harshly to a passing taxicab.

And strange as it may seem, at that moment I had really worked myself into the spirit of the scene. I actually felt a blighted being, the victim of a woman's wiles. Then she was there at my side, pale, agitated.

"I'm so grieved. Why didn't you speak

If I'd only known you cared. But then, you know, nobody takes you seriously. Perhaps, though, it's not too late. If you really, really care so much I'll try to break off my engagement with Bunny."

(Bunny was Mr. Jarraway Tope, an elderly Pittsburg manufacturer of suspenders—Tope's "Never-tear Ever-wear Suspenders.")

"No, no, it's too late now," I interrupted eagerly. "Things could never be the same. Besides, he loves you. He's a good old fellow. He will make you happy, far happier than I could. He is rich; I am poor. It is better so."

"Riches are not everything," she pouted miserably.

"No, but they're the best imitation of it I know. Oh, you hothouse flowers! You creatures of lace and luxury! You don't know what it is to be poor, to live from hand to mouth. How could you be happy in a cottage—I mean a Brooklyn flat? No, no, Boadicia, we must not let sentiment blind us. Never will I drag you down."

"But there's no question of poverty. You make lots of money?"

"A mere pittance," I cried bitterly. "It's my publishers who make the money. I'm no man of business. On a few beggarly royalties how can I hold up my end? No, I must put the world between us. Oh, it will be all right. Some day when we are both old and grey, and sentiment lies buried under the frost of time, we will perhaps meet again, and, clasping hands, confess that all was for the best."

"Oh, I hate to let you go away like that. If you have no money I have."

"As if I could ever touch a penny of yours," I interrupted her sternly.

"Horace," she pleaded, "you cut me to the heart. Don't go."

"Yes, yes. Believe me it's best. Why pro-

long this painful scene. I'll pray for your happiness, for both of your happinesses, yours and Bunny's. Perhaps my heart's not so badly broken after all." (I smiled a brave, twisted smile.) "For the last time, good-bye, good-bye."

With that I rushed blindly from the room. When I reached the street, I wiped away a few beads of perspiration.

"Oh, you everlasting, sentimental humbug!" I cried. "One of these days you'll get nicely nailed to the cross of your folly."

CHAPTER V

A SEASICK SENTIMENTALIST

If ever I should come to write my autobiography (as I fondly hope in the fulness of time my recognition as the American Dumas will justify me in doing) it will fall easily into chapters. For, so far, my life has consisted of distinct periods, each inspired by a dramatic conception of myself. Let me then try to forecast its probable divisions.

Chapter I.—Boyhood. Violently imaginative period.—Devouring ambition to become pirate chief.—Organised the "Band of Blood."—Antipathy to study.—Favourite literature: Jack Harkaway.

Chapter II.—Youth. Violently athletic period.—Devouring ambition to become great first baseman.—Organised the Angoras. Continued antipathy to study.—Favourite literature: The sporting rags.

Chapter III.—Cubhood. Violently red blood period.—Devouring ambition to became champion broncho buster. Went to Wyoming, and became the most cowboyish cowboy in seven counties.—Favourite literature: The yellow rags.

Chapter IV.—Undergraduate days. Violently intellectual period.—Devouring ambition to become literary mandarin.—Gave up games and became a bookworm. Commenced to write, but disdained anything less than an epic.—Favourite literature: The French decadents.

Chapter V.—Adolescence. Violently histrionic

period.—Devouring ambition to become a second Mansfield.—Joined the *Cruel Chicago* Company as general utility.—Chief literature: The theatrical rags.

Chapter VI.—Manhood. At age of twenty-one wrote *The Haunted Taxicab*, and scored immediate success.—Devouring ambition to write the Great American Novel.—Published nine more books in next five years, and managed to hold my own.

There you are—down to the time of which the present record tells. And now, in accordance with the plot, let me continue.

On a certain muggy morning of late November, a young man of conspicuously furtive bearing might have been seen climbing aboard the steamer bound for Naples. He wore the brim of his velour hat turned down, with the air of one who entirely wishes to avoid observation.

Over one arm hung a mackintosh, and at the end of the other dangled an alligator-skin suitcase. An inventory of its contents would have resulted as follows: A silk-lined, blue serge suit; three silk *négligé* shirts; three suits silk pyjamas; three suits silk underwear; three pairs silk socks; several silk ties, and sundry toilet articles.

If, in the above list, an insistence on the princely fabric is to be remarked, I must confess that I shrink from the contact of baser material. It was then with some dismay that I descended into the bowels of the ship, and was piloted to my berth by a squinting steward in shirt-sleeves. I gazed with distaste at the threadbare cotton blanket that was to replace the cambric sheets of the mighty. Then I looked at the oblique-eyed one, and observed that nonchalantly over his arm was hung another blanket of more sympathetic texture, and that his palm protruded in a mercenary curve. So into that

venial hollow I dropped half a dollar, and took the extra blanket. Then throwing my suitcase on the berth, I went on deck.

Shades of Cæsar! Garibaldi! Caruso! What had I "gone up against?" One and all my fellow passengers seemed to be of the race of garlic eaters. Not a stodgy Saxon face among them. Verily I was marooned in a sea of Dagos. Here we were, caged like cattle; above us, a tier of curious faces, the superior second class; still higher, looking down with disdain, the fastidious firsts. And here, herded with these degenerate Latins, under these derisive eyes, must I remain many days. What a wretched prospect! What rotten luck! And all the fault of these gad-about Chumley Graces, confound them!

But I did not lament for long. If ever there is an opening for the sentimentalist it is on leaving for the first time his native land. Could it be expected, then, that I, a professional purveyor of sentiment would be silent? Nay! as I watched the Statue of Liberty diminish to an interrogation mark, I delivered myself somewhat as follows:

Grey sea, grey sky, and grey, so grey
The ragged roof-line of my home;
Yet greyer far my mood than they,
As here amid this spawn of Rome
With tenderness undreamt before
I sigh: "Adieu, my native shore!"

To thee my wistful eyes I strain;
To thee, brave burg, I wave my hand;
Good-bye, oh giddy Tungsten Lane!
Good-bye, oh great Skyscraper Land!
Good-bye, Fifth Avenue so splendid . . . !!

And here my doggerel I ended. . . . Horrors on horrors! Could I believe my eyes? There, looking down from the promenade deck, in long ulsters and jaunty velour hats, were the three Misses Chumley Grace. They were laughing happily,

and looking right at me. Could anything, I wonder, have equalled the rapidity of my retreat? As rabbit dives into its burrow, as otter into its pool, so dived I, down, down to the dark hole they called my cabin, where I collapsed disgustedly on my bunk.

And there for five days I remained.

It may be assumed (so much are we the creatures of an artificial environment) that it is only in the more acute phases of life we realise our truer selves. As a woman in the dental chair, as a fat man coaxing a bed down a narrow stairway, as both sexes in the clutches of *mal de mer*, are for the moment stripped of all paltering pretence, so in the days that followed I had many illuminating glimpses of my inner nature. Never was a man more rent, racked, ravaged by the torments of sea-sickness. But let me read you an extract from my diary:

Eight hundred Italians on board, and we are packed like sardines in a keg. Our wedge-shaped cabin is innocent of ventilation. The bunks are three tiers high and three abreast; so that, as I have an outer one, a hulky Dago ascends and descends me a hundred times a day. Also I am on the lower row, and as both the men above me are violently sick, my situation may be imagined. The sourly stinking floors are swilled out every morning. My only comfort is that I am too calloused with misery to care about anything.

It's the awful, brutal sinking that fixes me; as if I were suddenly being let down the elevator shaft of the Singer Building at full speed, ten thousand times a day, then as suddenly yanked up again. By the dim light I can see hundreds of cockroaches crawling everywhere around me, elongated, coffee-coloured cockroaches, big ones, middle-sized ones, tiny baby ones. They wander to and fro, fearless and apparently aimless. But perhaps I am wrong about this. Perhaps they are moved by a purpose; perhaps they are even in the midst of a celebration following the mazes of a cockroach cotillion. As I lie watching them I speculate on this. What they live on may be guessed at. And as if to mock me on my bed of woe all the rollicking, frolicking sea-songs I have ever heard keep up a devilish conce t in my head, singing the praises of this fiendish and insatiable sea.

For nine-tenths of his time the artist lives the lives of other men more vividly than his own ; for the other tenth, his own ten times more vividly than other men. Of such transcendent tenths creation comes. It was then from the very poignancy of my sufferings that I began to evolve a paper on the pangs of *mal de mer*. It was to be the final expression of the psychology of sea-sickness. Even as I lay squirming in that sour, viscid gloom I rejoiced in the rapture of creation. It seemed, I thought, the best thing I had ever done. Though I had not put pen to paper, there it was, clearly written in my brain, every word sure of its election, every sentence ringing true. I longed to see it staring me from the printed page.

And on the morning of the sixth day I arose and regarded my shaving mirror. My face had peaked and paled, and was covered with fluffy hair, so that I looked like a pre-Raphaelite Christ. Indeed, so æsthetic was my appearance I had to restrain myself from speaking in blank verse.

How glorious was the clear, sweet air again !—With every breath of it I felt new life.—The sea was very amiable now—and playing children paved the sunlit deck.—A score of babies punctuated the picturesque confusion. On the decks above the plebeian seconds and the patrician firsts presented two tiers of amused faces. They were like curious spectators looking down into a bear pit.

Then suddenly did I realise my severance from my class, and, strange to say, it aroused in me a kind of defiant rage. For the first time democracy inspired me. For five days I had starved and suffered—or was it five years ? Anyway, the life of luxury and ease seemed far away. Goaded by the gay shouts of the shuffle-boarders on the upper deck, I felt to the full the resentment of the under-dog ; yea, ready to raise the red flag of revolt behind blood-boltered barricades of hate.

But all at once I became conscious of another sensation equally exorbitant. It was the first pang of a hunger such as never in my life had I endured. In imagination I saw myself at Sherrys, conning the bill of fare. With what an undreamt-of gusto I made a selection! How I revelled in a dazzling vision of delicate dishes served with sympathy! It was a gourmet's dream, the exquisite conception of a modern Lucullus. I almost drooled as I dictated it to a reverent head-waiter. Yea, I was half hunger-mad. When, oh when, would lunch-time come?

It came. It was the first meal I had seen served in the steerage, and it was served in buckets. You dipped into one, spiked a slab of beef floating in greasy swill, shovelled a wad of macaroni from a tin wash-basin to your tin plate, grabbed a chunk of stale bread from a clothes basket: there you were, set up for another five hours.

Too ravenous to demur, I seized my tin plate and rushed the ration-slingers. The messy meat I could not stomach, but I pried loose a little mountain of macaroni. I was busy wolfing it when on looking up I saw the youngest Miss Chumley Grace regarding me curiously. With many others she had come to see the animals fed.

"It's dollars to doughnuts," I thought, "she'll never know me in this beard. But all the same I'll keep my face concealed."

I had finished feeding, and was washing my plate at a running tap, when all at once I dropped it as if it had been red-hot. Brushing everyone aside I made a leap for my cabin, and reached it, I will swear, in record time. Frantically I felt under the pillow of my bunk. Too late! Too late! The wallet in which I kept my money was gone.

"Alas!" I sighed. "My faith in Roman honesty has received a nasty knock."

I did not report my loss. I was afraid the inevitable

fuss would betray me to the Chumley Graces. I seemed to spend my whole time dodging them now. Once or twice I found the spectacled gaze of poppa fixed upon me. Many times I sneaked away under the scrutiny of the girls. All this added to my other miseries, which in themselves might have served Dante for another canto of his Inferno.

But at last it was over. There was the blue bay of Naples. Now we were manœuvring into the seething harbour. Now we were keeping off with streams of water boatmen who retaliated by hurling billets of wood. Now we were throwing dimes to the diving boys. Now there ran through the ship the thrill of first contact with the dock. Hurrah ! In a few more moments I should be free, free to follow the Trail of Beautiful Adventure. True, I was broke ; but what a fine, clean feeling that was !

Clutching my alligator-skin suitcase I reconnoitered, with conspiratorial wariness. Cautiously I crept out. Softly I sneaked over to the nearest gangway. My foot was on it ; in another moment I would have made my escape. I could have laughed with joy when—a little hand was laid on my arm, and turning quickly I found myself face to face with the youngest Miss Chumley Grace.

" Oh, Mr. Madden," she chirped, " we knew you all along, but it's been such fun watching you. Do tell me, now, aren't you just doing it for a bet ? "

CHAPTER VI

AN INVOLUNTARY FIANCÉ

Alas and alas! I am engaged—an engagement according to Hoyle, sanctioned by poppa and sealed with a solitaire—irrevocably, overwhelmingly, engaged.

Who would have dreamed it? But in the great round-up of matrimony, isn't it always the unexpected that happens? I was run down, roped, thrown, before I knew what was happening to me. And the brand on me is "Guinivere Chumley Grace."

She is the youngest, the open-airiest, the most super-strenuous of the sporting sisters. She slays foxes, slaughters pheasants, has even made an air-flight. I have no doubt she despises poor, ordinary women who cook steaks, darn socks and take an intelligent interest in babies.

And this is the girl I am going to marry, I who hate horse-flesh, would not slay a bluebottle promenading on my nose, admire the domestic virtues, and hope that a woman will never cease to scream at the sight of a mouse. Can it be wondered at that I am in the depths of despair?

And it is all the fault of Italy?

Naples sprang at me, and, as we say, "put it all over me." Such welters of colourful life! Such visions of joy and dirt! Such hot-beds of rank-growing humanity! Diving boys and piratical longshoremen; plumed guardians of the police and ragged *lazzaroni;* whooping donkey drivers and pestiferous guides; clamour, colour, confusion, all to bewilder my prim Manhattan mind.

What a disappointment that had been; to stand

there one exultant moment with the Trail of Beautiful Adventure glimmering before; the next, to be hemmed in by the jubilant Chumley Graces, and hurried to the haughtiest of hotels, where poppa insisted on cashing my cheque for five hundred dollars.

But resignation to one's fate is comparatively easy in Naples. There, where villa and vineyard dream by an amethystine sea, where purple Capri and violet Vesuvius shimmer and change with every mood of sun and breeze, the line of least resistance seems alluringly appropriate.

There were days in which (accompanied by Miss Guinivere Chumley Grace) I roamed the Via Roma, stimulated by the vivid life that seethed around me; when I watched the bronze fishermen pull in their long, sea-curving nets; when the laziness of the *lazzaroni* fell upon me.

There were evenings in which (accompanied by Guinivere Chumley Grace) I sat on the terrace of the hotel, caressed by the balmy breeze, listening to the far-borne melody of mandolins, and gazing at the topaz lights that fringed the throbbing vast of foam and starlight.

There were nights when (accompanied by Guinivere) I watched the dull reflection of fiery-bowled Vesuvius, dreaming of the richly-storied past, and feeling my heart stir with a thousand sweet wonderings of romance.

Can it be wondered then, that some of this rapture and romance found an echo in my heart? Here was the time, the place, and—Guinivere. Only by a violent effort could I have saved myself, and violent efforts in Naples are unpopular. No; everything seemed to happen with relentless logic; and so one afternoon, looking down on the sweeping glory of the bay the following conversation took place:

SHE: Isn't it ripping?

I: Yes, it's too lovely for words. Why cannot we make our lives a harvest of such golden memories?

SHE: Yes, it would be awfully jolly, wouldn't it?

I: If we cannot make the moment eternal, let us at least live eternal in the moment.

SHE: But how can we?

I wasn't sure how we could, nor was I sure what I meant; but the freckled face was looking up at me so inquiringly, and the crisp-lipped mouth was pouted so invitingly that I sought the solution there. She, on her part, evidently found it so satisfactory that I laid considerable emphasis on it, and I was still further accentuating the emphasis when on looking up I found myself confronted by the stony, spectacled stare of poppa.

Anathema! Misericordia! After that there was nothing to do but ask for his blessing. I could not plead poverty, for he is a director in most of the railways in which I hold shares. The god of fools, who had so often moved to save me, had this time left me in the lurch. So it came about that I spent three hundred dollars out of my five in the purchase of a diamond ring; and there matters stand.

Well, I shall have to go through with it. If there is one ideal more than another I hold up to myself it is that of The Man who Makes Good. I have never been untrue to my promises; and now I have promised Guinivere a cottage at Newport and a flat in town. Life looms before me a grey vista of conventional monotony and Riverside Drive.

If only she cared for any of the things I do! But no! She is one of the useless daughters of the rich, who expect to be petted, pampered and provided for in the way they have been accustomed, forgetting that the old man struggled a lifetime to give them that limousine and the house on Fifth Avenue. She is one of the great army of women who think men should sweat that women may spend. I have

always maintained that it was a woman's place to do her share of the work; and here I was, marrying a pleasure-seeker, an idler.

Better, I thought, some daughter of democracy; yea, even such a one as but a little while ago tidied my apartment, that dark-haired damsel with the melancholy mouth and the eyes of an odalisque.

As I pretended to work I had often watched my charming chambermaid; but my interest was purely professional, till one day it was stimulated by an unusual incident. There was a villainous-looking valet-de-chambre who brought me my coffee and rolls in the morning, and who presided over a little pantry from which they seemed to emanate. Passing this pantry, I witnessed a brisk scuffle between the chambermaid and the valet. He made an effort to kiss her, and she repulsed him with evident disgust. From then on I could see the two were at daggers drawn, and that the man only waited a chance to take his revenge.

After that, it may not be deemed strange that I should have taken a more personal interest in my handmaid; that I should have practised my Italian on her on every opportunity; that I should have found her name to be Lucrezia Poppolini, and that of her tormentor, Victor. A spirit of protection glowed in me; I half hoped for dramatic developments, pitied her in her evident unhappiness, and vowed that if she were persecuted any more I would take a hand in the game.

In a rhapsodic vein I had begun an article on Naples, and ranged far and wide in search of impressions. It was one evening I had pleaded work to escape from Guinivere (who was getting on my nerves), and I had sought the quarter of the town down by the fish-market. Frequently had I been moved to remark that in Naples there seemed to be no danger of depopulation, and the appearance of a good woman approaching strengthened my

conviction. Then as she came close I saw that she was only a girl, very poor, and intensely miserable. But something else made me start and stare: she was the exact counterpart of my interesting chambermaid.

"Perhaps they are twin sisters," thought I. "This girl's trouble would account for the worry and sadness on the face of Lucrezia. Here is material for drama."

So taken was I by my twin-sister theory, that I ended by half-convincing myself I was right. Then, by a little play of fancy, I allowed for the following dramatis personæ:

Victor, the Villainous Valet.
Lucrezia, the Chaste Chambermaid.
Twin Sister in trouble.
False Lover of Twin Sister.
Aged Parent.

Thus you will see how my little drama was interesting me. On her daily visits to my room, I watched my poor heroine with sympathetic heart. What was going to happen? Probably Aged Parent would stab False Lover, and Villainous Valet, who happened to witness the deed, would demand as the price of his silence the honour of Chaste Chambermaid. How I began to hate the man as he roused me at eight o'clock with my steaming Mocha! How I began to pity the girl as dreary and distraught she changed my towels! Surely the *dénouement* was close at hand.

Poppa and I shared a parlour from which opened our respective bedrooms. It had outlook on the bay, and often the girls would sit there with their father instead of in their own *salon*. I was not surprised, then, on my return from a copy-hunting expedition to hear the sound of many voices coming from within.

But I was decidedly surprised, on opening the

door, to find quite a dramatic scene being enacted. The backs of the actors were to me, and they did not see me enter. In the centre of the stage, as it were, were Victor and Lucrezia. Behind them the fat little manager of the hotel. To the right poppa and Guinivere. To the left Edythe and Gladys, the elder sisters.

Lucrezia looked pale as death, and cowered as if someone had struck her. Facing her, with flashing eyes and accusive digit was the vengeful Victor. The little manager was trying to control the situation, while poppa and offspring, staring blankly, were endeavouring to follow the Italian of it.

"Baggage! Thief!" Victor was crying. "I saw her. I stole after her! I watched her enter the signor's room. There on the dressing table it was, the little purse he had so carelessly left. She draws near, she examines it . . . quick! She pushes it into her blouse—so. Oh I saw it all through the chink of the door."

"No, no," the girl protested, in accents of terror and distress; "I took nothing, I swear by the Virgin, nothing. He lies. He would make for me trouble. I am innocent, innocent."

"I am no liar," snarled the man. "If you do not believe me, see—she has it now. Search her. Look in the bosom of her dress. Ah! I will. . . ."

He caught her roughly. There was a scuffle in which she screamed, and from her corsage he tore forth a small flat object.

"What did I tell you!" he cried vindictively. "Who is the liar now? Oh thief! thief! I, Victor, have unmasked thee——"

Here he turned round and suddenly beheld me. His manner grew more exultant. "Ha! It is the signor himself."

Then I saw that what he held out so triumphantly was my little gold purse, and in the breathless pause that followed, cinema pictures were flashing and

flickering in my brain. How vivid they were! Twin sister imploring aid—girl distracted—no money to give her—What's to be done?—Suddenly sees gold purse—Temptation: "I'll just borrow one little piece. The signor will never miss it. Some day I'll pay it back."

How she struggles, gazes at it like one fascinated, puts out a hand, shrinks back, looks round fearfully! Then at last she takes it in her hand—a sudden noise—impulsively she pushes it in the bosom of her dress. Then Victor's high pitched voice of denunciation, bringing everyone on the scene.

All this I saw in a luminous moment, but—where did I come in. My heart bled for the poor girl so tried, so tempted. A quixotic flame leapt in me. There was the vindictive valet; there was the frail Lucrezia; there was the centre of the stage waiting for what?—me. Ah! could I ever resist the centre of the stage?

So I stepped quietly forward, and, to complete the artistic effect, the girl, who had been gazing at me with growing terror, swayed as if to faint. Deftly I caught her over my left arm; then with the other hand I snatched the purse from the astonished Victor, and deliberately pushed it back into the blouse of Lucrezia.

"The girl is innocent," I said calmly. "The money is her own. I, myself, gave it to her—this morning."

* * * * * *

Of the scene that followed I have no vivid recollection. I was conscious that poppa herded his flock hurriedly from the room; that Lucrezia disappeared with surprising suddenness; that the dumbfounded Victor was ordered to "begone" by an indignant *maître d'hotel*, who, while extremely polite, seemed to regard me with something of reproach.

I was, in fact, rather dazed by my sudden action, so hastily packing the alligator-skin suitcase I

paid my bill and ordered a carriage. Telling the man to drive in the direction of Possillipo, I there selected a hotel of a more diffident type, and in view of my reduced finances, engaged a single room.

The day following was memorable for two interviews. The first, in the forenoon, was with poppa. He had no doubt found my address from the coachman, and had come to have it out with me. In his most puritanical manner he wanted to know why I gave the girl the money.

"I refuse to explain," I said sourly.

"Then, sir, I must refuse to consider you worthy of my daughter's hand."

My heart leapt. Escape from Guinivere! It seemed too good to be true. Lucrezia, I thank thee! Nor do I grudge thee twice the gold thy purse contains. Concealing my joy I answered:

"It shall be as you please, sir."

His church-deacon face relaxed a little. He had evidently expected more trouble.

"And I must ask you, sir, not to communicate with her in any way."

I summoned a look of sadness worthy of a lover whose heart is broken.

"As her father," I observed submissively, "your wishes must be respected."

He laid a small box on the table. "Guinivere returns you your ring." Then he hesitated a little. "Have you nothing at all to say for yourself? I too have been young; I can make some allowance, but there are limits. I don't like to think that you are an absolute scoundrel."

"If I were to tell you," I said, "that I gave the girl the money out of pure philanthropy, gave it to help a wretched twin-sister with an unborn babe, —what would you say?"

"I would say you were trying to bolster up your intrigue with a fiction. Bah! Young men don't give purses of gold to pretty girls out of philanthropy.

Besides, we have discovered that your precious friend is nothing more or less than a hotel thief. A detective arrived just after you left and identified her."

"I don't believe it," I said indignantly. "These Italian women all look alike. Where's the poor girl now?"

He grinned sarcastically. "Probably it is I who should ask you that."

His meaning was so obvious I rose and smilingly opened the door. Off he went with a snort, and that was the last I ever saw of poppa.

But my second interview! It took place at ten in the evening. I was reading the Italian paper in bed when there came a soft knock at my door.

"Come in," I said, thinking it was the valet with my nightcap. Then, as if moved by a spring I sat bolt upright. With one hand I tried to fasten the neck button of my pyjamas, with the other to smooth down my disordered locks. I verily believe I blushed all over, for who should my late visitor be but—Lucrezia.

She was dressed astonishingly well, and looked altogether different from the slim, trim domestic I had known. Indeed, being all in black, she might well have passed for a charming young widow. Of course I was embarrassed beyond all words, but if she shared my feeling she did not show it.

"Oh, signor, how can I thank you?" she cried, advancing swiftly.

"Not at all," I stammered. "Pray calm yourself. Excuse me receiving you in this deshabille. Please take a seat."

I indicated a chair some distance away, but to my confusion she seated herself on the bed. I reached for my jacket and wriggled into it; after which I felt more at ease.

"I have just found out where you were," she

began. "I could not wait until to-morrow to thank you. You'll forgive me, won't you?"

Really she spoke remarkably well. Really she looked remarkably stunning. Her complexion had the tone of old ivory, and her eyes of an odalisque seemed to refract all the light of the room. I could feel them fixed on me in a distracting, magnetizing way.

"Don't mention it," I answered. "There's nothing to forgive. It's very good of you to think of thanking me."

She begun to fumble with a glove button. "Tell me," she almost whispered, "tell me, why did you do it?"

"Oh I—I don't quite know?"

She threw out her hands with an impulsive gesture. Her black eyes glowed fiercely, then grew soft.

"Was it because you—you loved me?"

I stared. This was too much. Was the girl mad? I replied with some asperity:

"No, it was because I thought you must be in some desperate trouble. I was sorry for you. I wanted to save you."

"Ah! you were right. I was in great trouble, and you alone understood. You are noble, signor, noble; but you are cold. We women of the South, we are so different. When we love, we love with all the heart. We do not conceal it; we do not deny it. Know then, signor, from the moment you came so bravely to my aid like some hero of romance I loved you, loved you with a passion that makes me forget all else. And you, you do not care. It is nothing to you. Oh unhappy me! Tell me, signor, do you not think you can love me?"

I shrank back to the furthest limit of the bed-post. Again I thought: "Surely the girl is mad, perhaps dangerous as well. I've heard that these Neapolitan girls all carry daggers in their garters. I hope this

young lady doesn't follow the fashion. I think I'd better humour her."

Aloud I said: "I don't know. This is so sudden. I haven't had time to analyse my feelings yet. Perhaps I do. Give me to-night to think of it. Come to-morrow. But anyway, why should I let myself love you? I am a bird of passage. I have business. I must go away in a few days."

"Where is the signor going?"

"To Paris," I said cautiously.

Her strange eyes gleamed with tragic fire. "If you go to Paris without me," she cried passionately, "I will follow you."

"Well, well," I said soothingly, "we'll see. But now please leave me to think of all this. Don't you see I'm agitated. You've taken me by surprise. Please give me till to-morrow."

Her brows knit with jealous suspicion. I half thought she was going to reach for that dagger, but instead she rose abruptly.

"Oh, you are cold, you men of the North. Is there nothing I can do to show my gratitude?"

"Yes," I answered eagerly. "Go quickly, before anyone finds you here."

"Bah!" she exploded with fierce contempt. "What does it matter? But signor, will you let me kiss you?"

"Certainly, if you wish." I extended one cheek.

She gave me a quick, smothering embrace from which I had difficulty in detaching myself. "To-morrow then without fail. But where and when?"

"I'll meet you at the Aquarium at eleven o'clock," I said.

"At the Aquarium, then. And you'll think of me? And you'll try to love me?"

"Yes, yes, I will. Please go out very quietly. Au revoir till eleven to-morrow."

But by eleven o'clock next morning I was exultantly on my way to London.

CHAPTER VII

A BOTTLE OF INK

THE disadvantage of persistent globe-trotting is that it makes the world so deplorably provincial. With familiarity the glamour of the far and strange is swept away, till at last there is nothing left to startle and delight. Better, indeed, to leave shrines unvisited and shores unsought; then may we still hold them fondly under the domination of dream.

Much had I read of the lure of London, of its hold upon the heart; but to the end I entirely failed to realise its charm. To me in those grim December days it always remained the City of Grime and Gloom, so that I ultimately left it the poorer by a score of lost illusions.

Drawing near the Great Grey City—how I had looked forward to this moment as, alert to every impression, I stared from the window of the train! Yet at its very threshold I shrank appalled. Could I believe my eyes? There confronting me was street after street of tiny houses all built in the same way. Nay, I do not exaggerate. They were as alike as ninepins, dirty, drab cubes, each with the same oblong of sordid back-yard, the same fringe of abortive front garden. Oh what a welter of architectural crime! Could it be wondered at that the bricks of which they were composed seemed to blush with shame?

Then the roofs closed in till they formed a veritable plain, on which regiments of chimneys seemed to stand at attention amid saffron fog. Then great, gloomy corrugations, down which I could see ant-like armies moving hither and thither: then an

arrest in a place of steam and smoke and skurrying and shouting : Charing Cross Station.

How spitefully cold it was ! Autos squattered through the tar-black mud. A fine drizzle of rain was falling, yet save myself no one seemed to mind it—so cheery and comfortable seemed those red-faced Islanders in their City of Soot. Soot, at that moment, was to me all-dominant. Eagerly it overlaid the buildings of brick ; joyfully it grimed those of stone. It swathed the monuments, and it achieved on the churches daring effects in black and grey. After all, it had undoubted artistic value. Then a smudge of it settled on my nose, and with every breath I seemed to inhale it. Finally a skittish motor bus bespattered me with that tar-like mud and I felt dirtier than ever.

But what amount of drizzle could damp my romantic ardour as suitcase in hand I stood in Trafalgar Square ? Here was another occasion for that sentimental reverie which was my speciality, so I began :

" Alone in London, in the seething centre of its canorous immensity. Around me swirl the swift, incurious crowds. Oh, city of a million sorrows ; here do I come to thee poor, friendless, unknown, yet oh ! so rich in hope. Shall I then knock at thy countless doors in vain ? Shall I then—— "

A sneeze interrupted me at this point. It is hard to sneeze and be sentimental ; besides, I recognised in the words I had just spoken those I had put into the mouth of Harold Cleaveshaw, hero of my novel, *The Handicap*. But then Harold had posed in the centre of Madison Square and addressed his remarks to the Flatiron Building, while I was addressing the Nelson Monument and a fountain whose water seemed saturated with soot.

Do not think the moment was wasted, however. Far from it. The likeness suggested an article

comparing the two cities. For instance: New York, a concretion; London, an accretion. New York, an uplift; London, an outspread. New York, blatant; London, smug. New York, a city on tiptoe, raw, bright, wind-besomed; London, the nightmare of a dyspeptic chimney-sweep. New York, a city born, organic, spontaneous; London, an accident, a patch-work, a piecing on. And so on.

Pondering these and other points of contrast, I wandered up Charing Cross Road into Oxford Street. In a bookshop I saw, with a curious feeling of detachment, a sixpenny edition of my novel, *The Red Corpuscle*. Somehow at that moment I could scarcely associate myself with it. So absorbed was I becoming in my new part that the previous one was already unreal to me. I took up the book with positive dislike, and was turning it over when an officious shop-boy suggested:

"Don't you want to read it, mister?"

"Heaven forbid!" I replied; "I wrote it."

He sniffed, as much as to say, "Think you're smart, don't you?"

Up Southampton Row I chanced, and in a little street off Tavistock Square I found a temporary home. A cat sleeping on a window-sill suggested Peace, and a donkey-cart piled high with cabbages pointed to Plenty. But as cabbages do not find favour in the tyrannical laboratory of my digestion, I vetoed Mrs. Switcher's proposal that I take dinner in the house. However, I ordered ham and eggs every morning, with an alternative of haddock or sausage and bacon.

These matters settled, I found myself the tenant of a fourth-floor front in a flat brick building of triumphant ugliness. I could see a melancholy angle of the square, some soot-smeared trees stretching in inky tentacles to a sullen sky, a soggy garden that

seemed steeped in despairing contemplation of its own unworthiness.

For Mrs. Switcher, my landlady, I conceived an enthusiastic dislike. A sour, grinding woman who reminded me of a meat-axe, I christened her Rain-in-the-Face in further resemblance of a celebrated Indian chief. But if I found in her no source of a sympathetic inspiration, in the near-by Reading Room of the British Museum there certainly was. In that studious calm, under battalions of books secure in their circles of immortality, I was profoundly happy. Often I would pause to study those about me, the spectacled men, the literary hack with the shiny coat-sleeve of the Reading-room *habitué*, the women whose bilious complexions and poky skirts suggested the league of desperate spinsterhood.

A thousand ghosts haunted that great dome. It was a mosaic of faces of dead and gone authors, wistfully watching to see if you would read their books. And if you did, how they hovered down from the greyness and smiled sweetly on you; other ghosts there were too, ghosts of the famous ones who had bent over these very benches, who had delved into that mine of thought just as I was delving. Here they had toiled and triumphed, even as I would toil and triumph. Spurred and exalted, under that great dome where the only sound seemed to be the whirr of busy brains, I spent hours of rarest rapture.

To the solitary the spirits whisper. Ideas came to me at this time in a bewildering swarm, and often I regretted some fancy lost, some subtlety unset to words. So by book-browsing, by curious roaming, by brooding thought, my mental life extended its horizons. Yet knowing no one, speaking to no one, living so much within myself, each day became more dreamlike and unreal. There were times when I almost doubted my own identity,

times when, if you had assured me I was John Smith, I would have been inclined to agree with you.

With positive joy I watched my money filter away. "Good!" I reflected. "I shall soon be penniless, reduced to eating stale crusts and sleeping on the iron benches of the Embankment. Who can divine the dazzling possibilities of vicissitude? All my life I have battled with prosperity; now, at last, I shall achieve adversity. I will descend the ladder of success. I will rub shoulders with Destitution. I may even be introduced to Brother Despair."

Enthusiasm glowed in me at the thought, and absorbed in those ambitious dreams I cried: "Thank God for life's depths, that we may have the glory of outclimbing them."

And here, be it said, we make a mistake when we pity the poor. It is the rich we should pity, those who have never known the joy of poverty, the ecstasy of squeezing the dollar to the last cent. How good the plain fare looks to our hunger! How sweet the rest after toil! How exciting the uncertainty of the next day's supper! How glorious the unexpected windfall of a few coppers! Was ever nectar so exquisite as that cup of coffee quaffed at the stall on the Embankment after a night spent on those excruciating benches? Never to have been desperately poor—ah! that is never to have lived.

My shibboleth at this time was a large bottle of ink which I bought and placed on my mantelpiece. Through a haze of cigarette smoke I would address it whimsically:

"Oh, exquisite fluid, what magic words are hidden in thine ebon heart! What lover's raptures and what gems of thought! Let others turn to dusty ledgers your celestial stream, to bills of lading and to dull notorial deeds; to me you are the poet's dream, the freaksome fancy of the essayist, the

stuff that shapes itself in precious prose. In you, oh most divine elixir, fame and fortune are dissolved. In you, enchanted liquid, strange stories simmer, and bright humour bubbles up. Oh, magical bottle, of whom I will make life and light, gold and jewels, laughter and tears, thrill to your dusky heart with the sense of immortality ! "

It was while surveying the garbage heap in the rear of Mrs. Switcher's premises that there came to me the idea of a short story, to be called *The Microbe.*

Through reading an article in a magazine Mr. Perkins, a middle-aged clerk in a dry-salter's warehouse, becomes interested in the Germ Theory. Half-contemptuous at first, he begins to make a study of it, and soon is quite fascinated. Being of a high-strung, imaginative nature, the thing gets on his nerves, and he begins to think germs, to dream germs, to dread germs every moment of his life. He fears them in the air he breathes, in the food he eats, even on the library books that tell him all about them.

Mr. Perkins becomes obsessed. He refuses to kiss the somewhat overblown rose of his affections, to enter a train, an omnibus, a theatre. He analyses his food, sterilises his water, disinfects his room daily, till his landlady gives him notice. Finally he can no longer breathe the air of a microbe-infected office, and he resigns the situation he has held for twenty years to become a tramp. Yet even here, in the wind on the heath, on the hill's top, by the yeasty sea, there is no peace for him. He broods, he fasts, he bcomes a monomaniac. Then he thinks of the germs in his own body, of the good microbes and the naughty microbes fighting their vendetta from birth to death, his very blood their battle-ground.

No longer can he bear it. He realises the impossibility of escape. He himself is a little world, a

civil war of microbes. How he hates them! Yet there remains to him his revenge. Ha! Ha! He has the power to destroy that world. So beggared, broken, desperate, he returns to London, and with a wild shriek of joy he throws himself from the Tower Bridge.

Yea, even in the end he has been destroyed by a microbe, the most deadly of all, the terrible microbe called Fear.

One morning, dreamily incubating my story, I happened to glance out of my window. I was gazing absently on my corner of the lugubrious square when a little figure of a girl came into view. She wore a grey mantle, and her face was like a splash of white. Walking with a quick, determined step, in a moment she had disappeared.

In about five minutes I happened to look up again. There was the same slim figure rounding the corner, to again disappear.

"Something automatic about this," I said. "It's getting interesting." So, taking out my watch, I judged the time, and in another five minutes I looked up. Yes, there was my girl in grey walking with the same purposeful stride.

"This is getting monotonous," I observed, after I had seen her appear and disappear a few more times. "Such persistent pedestrianism destroys my powers of concentration. Let me then sally forth and see what this mysterious young female is celebrating. Perhaps if I stare at her hard enough she will choose either Russell or Bloomsbury Square for her constitutional, and not distract a poor, hard-working story-grinder at his labours."

But when I got outside I found she had gone, so I decided to seek my beloved Reading Room and look up some articles on microbes.

CHAPTER VIII

THE GIRL WHO LOOKED INTERESTING

After a hard skirmish with the catalogue of the Reading Room, which, with reference and counter-reference, defied me stubbornly, yet finally yielded to my assault, I found myself, three hours later, seated in an A.B.C. restaurant in Southampton Row.

From motives of economy I had given up eating dinners. Breakfast and a meat lunch were now my sole fortifying occasions, and of the latter this A.B.C. was oftenest the scene. I liked its friendly fires, its red plush chairs, its air of thrift and cheer. Behold me, then, a studiously shabby young man, eating a shilling lunch and wearing as a symbol of my servitude a celluloid collar. Little would you have dreamed that but two short months before I had been toying with terrapin in the gold room of Delmonico's.

But such dramatic contrasts charm me, and I was placidly engaged in the excavation of a Melton Mowbray pie, when a girl in grey took a place at the next table. Her long mantle was rather the worse for wear, her hat a cheap straw. Her small hands were encased in cotton gloves, and her feet in foreign-looking shoes.

"Painfully poor," I thought, "yet evidently a worshipper of the goddess *Comme il faut.*" Then—"Why, surely I know her? Surely it is my mysterious female of the matutinal Marathon."

With timid hesitation she ordered a bun and milk. How interesting her voice was! It had a bell-like quality the more marked because she spoke with a strong inflexion, and an odd precision of accent.

A voice with colour, I thought; violet; yes, she had a violet voice.

But I had not seen her face, only beneath her low straw hat her hair of a gleamy brown, very fine of texture and so thick as to seem almost black. It was brought round in a coiled braid over each ear, and, where it parted at the back, showed a neck of ivory whiteness. Somewhat curiously I wished she would turn her head.

Then, as if to please me, she did so, and what I saw was almost the face of a child, so small and delicate of feature was it. It was almost colourless, of a pure pallor that contrasted with the rich darkness of her hair. The mouth was small and wistfully sweet, the chin rather long and fine, the cheeks faintly hollowed. Her brow, I noted, was broad and full, her eyebrows frank and well-defined. But it was the eyes themselves that arrested me. They were set far apart and of a rare and faultless sea-blue. Such eyes in a woman of real beauty would have been pools of love for many a fool to drown in, and even in this fragile, shrinking girl they were haunting, thrilling eyes. For the rest, she was small, slender, sad-looking, and tired, yes, tired, as if she wanted to rest and rest and rest.

"A consumptive type," I thought irritably. "Seems quite worn out. Why does she persist in that pedestrian foolishness—that's what I want to know?"

I watched her as she ate her bun, and when she rose I rose too. She payed out of a worn little purse, a plethoric purse, but, alas! its fulness was of copper. Down Woburn Street she disappeared, and I looked after her with some concern. A gentle, shrinking creature, pathetically afraid of life.

"God help her," I said, "in this ruthless city, if she has neither friends nor money." I decided I

would write a story around her, a story of struggle and temptation. Yes, I would call it *The Girl Who Looked Interesting*.

That night I thought a good deal about my girl and my story, but next morning a distraction occurred. London revealed itself in the glory of a fog. At last I was exultant. Here was the city I had come so far to see. For the squat buildings seemed to take on dignity and height. Through the mellow haze they loomed as vaguely as the domiciles of a dream. The streets were corridors of mystery, and alone, abysmally alone, I seemed to be in some city of fantasy and fear.

But the river—there the fog achieved its ghostliest effects. As I wandered down the clammy embankment, cloud-built bridges emerged ethereally, and the flat barges were masses of mysterious shadow. St. Stephen's was a spectral suggestion, and Whitehall a delicate silver-point etching. I thanked the gods for this evasive and intangible London, half-hidden, half-revealed in its vesture of all-mystifying fog.

Well, I was tired at last, and I turned to go home. But I must have missed my way, for I found myself in a long dim street, which I judged by its furniture-fringed pavement to be Tottenham Court Road. Filled with a pleasant sense of adventure, I kept on till I came to what must have been Hampstead Road. There my eyes were drawn to a large flamboyant painting above the window of a shop in a side-street. Drawing near, I read in flaring letters the following:

EXHIBITION

AMAZING! AMUSING! UNIQUE!

O'FLATHER'S EDUCATED FLEAS

As performed with tremendous success before
all the Crowned Heads of Europe and the
Potentates of Asia. For a limited
time Professor O'Flather will
give the people of London
the opportunity of see-
ing this extraordin-
ary exhibition.
Entertaining !
Instructive !
Original !
Come
and
See

THE SCIENTIFIC MARVEL OF THE CENTURY !

The marvellous insects that have all the
intelligence of human beings.

Admission, Sixpence. Children, Half-price.

A large canvas showed a number of insects, vivaciously engaged in duelling, dancing, drawing water from wells, and so on. Watching them with beaming rapture was a distinguished audience, including the Czar of Russia, the Emperor William, Li Hung Chang, the Shah of Persia, and Mr. Roosevelt.

I was turning away when a big, ugly individual appeared in the doorway. He was a heavy-breathing man with a mouth like a codfish, and bloodshot eyes that peered through pouchy slits. He had a blotched, greasy face that hung down in dewlaps. From under a Stetson hat his stringy, brindled hair streamed over the collar of his fur-lined coat. On his grubby hand an off-colour diamond, big as a pea, tried to out-sparkle another in the dirty bosom of his shirt. He reeked of pomatum, and his teeth looked as if they had been cleaned with a towel. No mistaking the born showman of the Bowery breed. Moved by a sudden idea, I gracefully addressed him :

" Professor O'Flather, I presume ? "

The impressario looked at me with black-lustre eye. He transferred a chew of tobacco from one cheek to the other ; then he spat with marvellous precision on a passing dog. Finally he admitted reluctantly :

" Yep ! That's me."

" Pardon me, Professor, but I'm a newspaper man. I represent the *Daily Dredger*, with which, of course, you are familiar. I have been specially commissioned by my journal to write up your exhibition. Can you favour me with a brief interview ? "

At the magic word " newspaper " his manner changed. He extended a hand like a small ham.

" Right you are, mister. Always glad to see the noospaper boys."

He ushered me into the shop, and, switching on a light, bellowed in a voice of brass, " Jinny ! " From behind a crimson curtain appeared a little Jap girl in a green kimono.

" Faithful little devil ! " said the Professor. " Met 'er in a Yokerhammer joint, and fetched 'er along for the sake of the show. Jinny, uncover the stock. This gen'lman's a hintervooer."

With eager pride the girl obeyed. From a glass case in the centre of the room she removed a covering. The case was divided into sections, in which were a number of suggestive shapes, supinely quiescent.

" We turn 'em over," O'Flather explained, " when they ain't working, so's they won't use up all their force. We need it in the business."

Then Jinny, with the delicacy of a lover, proceeded to put each through its performance.

" That there's Barthsheber at the well," said the Professor, pointing with a fat forefinger to a black speck that was frantically raising and lowering a string of buckets on an endless chain.

" Them's the dooelists," he went on, indicating two

who, rearing on their hind legs, clashed tiny swords with all the fire and fury of Macbeth and Macduff.

"Here we have the original Tango Team," he continued, showing a pair who went through the motions of the dance in time to a tiny musical box.

Then, with pardonable pride, he drew my attention to a separate case containing a well-made model of a little farm. "There!" he said, extending his grubby hand, "all run by the little critters." And, sure enough, there were active little insects drawing ploughs up and down green furrows; others were hoeing with tremendous energy; others mowing with equal enthusiasm. Here, too, was a miniature threshing machine, turned by four black specks lying on their backs, with other frantic black specks feeding it, and an extra strenuous one forking away the straw.

As I expressed my admiration of their industry, the Professor, with growing gusto, dilated on the cleverness of his pets, and put them through their paces. There was a funeral, a chariot race, a merry-go-round, and some other contrivances no less ingenious. Lastly he showed me a glass case containing many black specks.

"Raw material. Them's the wild ones I keep to take the place of the tame ones that dies. At first I have to put 'em in a bit of a glass box like a pill box, and turning on an axis same's a little treadmill. That's to break 'em of the jumping habit. Every time they jump—bing! they hit the glass hard, so by and by they quit. But they have to keep a-moving, because the box keeps going round. In a few days they're broke in to walk all right."

"Most ingenious!"

"All my own notion. Since I started in the business, many's the hundred I've broke in. I guess I know more about the little critters than any man living."

It was with a view to tap a little of this knowledge

that I invited the Professor to a near-by pub., and there, under the influence of sympathetic admiration and hot gin, he expanded confidentially.

"All of them insects you saw," he informed me "comes from Japan. They grow bigger over there, and more intelligent. I've experimented with nigh every kind, but them Jap ones is the best. And here I want to say that it's only the females is any good. The males is mulish. Besides they're smaller and weaker, and not so intelligent. Funny that, ain't it? That's an argyment for Woman's Suffrage. No, the males is no good."

"And how do you train them, Professor?" I queried.

"Well, first of all you've got to hitch 'em up, got to get a silk thread round their waists. That's a mighty ticklish oppyration, but Jinny's good at it. You see, they're so slick cement won't stick to 'em, and if you was to use wax it kills 'em in a day or two. So we've got to get a silk loop round their middle, and cement a fine bristle to it. Once we have 'em harnessed up we begin to train 'em. That's just a matter of patience. Some's apter than others. Barthsheeber there was very quick. In a few days she was on to her job."

"And how long do they live?"

"Oh, about a year, but I've had 'em for nigh two. They get mighty weak towards the last though. You know, a female in prime condition can draw twelve hundred times her own weight."

"Wonderful! And what do they eat?"

"Well," said O'Flather, thoughtfully, "a performer can go about four days without eating, but we feed 'em every day. Jinny used to do it. She loves 'em. But it's hard on a person. I've got a young woman engaged just now."

"A young woman!"

"Yep, but she's a poor weak bit of a thing. I don't think as she'll stick it much longer. You see

there's lots of folks the little devils won't take to—me, for instance. Blood's too bitter, I guess. They seem to prefer the women, too. Then again, they feed better if the body's hot, specially if the skin's perspiring."

"How very interesting!" I said absently. Then suddenly the reason of it came to me. The insects had no intelligence, no consciously directed power. The motive that inspired them was—Fear. Their extraordinary demonstrations were caused by their desperate efforts to escape. It was fear that drew the coaches and the gun-carriages; fear that made those kicking on their backs turn the threshing mills; fear in the fight to free themselves from the stakes to which they were chained that made the duellists clash their sabres, and the Bath-shebas work at their wells. It was even fear that made those two lashed side by side, and head to tail, run round in opposite directions to get away from each other, till they gave the illusion of a waltz. Fear as a motive power! This exhibition, outwardly so amusing, was really all suffering and despair, struggle born of fear, pleasure gained at the cost of pain. Exquisitely ludicrous; yet how like life, how like life!

"Professor O'Flather," I said gravely, "you have taught me a lesson I will never forget."

"Naw," said the Professor modestly, "it ain't nuthin'. Hope you get a few dollars out of it. Mind you give the show a boost."

We were standing by the doorway of the exhibition when a slim figure in grey brushed past us and entered. I started, I could not be mistaken—it was the heroine of my story *The Girl Who Looked Interesting*.

"Who's that, Professor—the girl who's just gone in?"

"That," said O'Flather, with a shrug, "why, that's the young woman wot feeds the fleas."

CHAPTER IX

THE CHEWING GUM OF DESTINY

ALLURED by a sign : " A Cut off the Joint for Sixpence," I lunched in a little eating-house off Tottenham Court Road. I was at the tapioca pudding stage of the repast, and in a mood of singular complacency.

" Six weeks have gone," I pondered. " I have spent nearly a third of the sum I realised from the sale of Guinivere's engagement ring. In my ambition to fail in the world, already I have accomplished much. Behold ! my boots are cracked across the uppers. Regard ! the suggestive glossiness of my coat-sleeves. Observe ! the bluey brilliance of my celluloid collar. Oh, mighty Mammon, chain me to thine oar ! Grind me, Oppression, 'neath thy ruthless heel ! Minions of Monopoly, hound me to despair !—not all your powers combined in fell intent can so inspire me with the spirit of Democracy as can the sticky feel of this celluloid collar around my neck ! "

With which sentiment I lit a cigarette, and took from my pocket a copy of the *Gotham Gazette*. I had seen it looking very foreign and forlorn in a newsagents, and had bought it out of pity for its loneliness. I was glancing through it when a name seemed to leap at me, and I felt my heart stand still. I read :

> " Yesterday afternoon patrician Fifth Avenue was the scene of a saddening incident. It was almost opposite Tiffany's, and the autos were passing in a continuous stream. At this time and this place it is almost as difficult

to cross the Rubicon as to cross the Avenue; yet, taking advantage of a lull in the traffic, a well-dressed man—who has since been identified as Charles Fitzbarrington, an ex-army officer resident in Haarlem—was observed to make the daring attempt. Half way over he was seen to stumble, and come to the ground. Those who saw the rash act held their breaths, and when the nearest spectators could reach him to rescue him from his perilous position, they found to their surprise that the man was dead. . . ."

I dropped the paper with a groan. Captain Fitzbarrington dead! Mrs. Fitz, free! My promise to marry her! The terrible twins! Oh, God. . . .

"Alas!" I cried, "I am undone!—betrayed by an incurably romantic disposition; asphyxiated in the effervescence of my own folly; ignominiously undone!"

As if it were yesterday I remembered the faded apartment in Haarlem, my protests of undying devotion, the words that now seemed written in remorseless flame:

"*If anything should happen to him, if by any chance we should find ourselves free, send for me, and I'll come to you, even though the world lie between us. By my life, by my honour, I swear it.*"

Had I really uttered that awful rot? Oh, what a fool I'd been! But it was too late now. I must make the best of it. Never yet have I gone back on my word (though I have put some very poetic constructions on it). But here there was no chance of evasion. She would certainly expect me to marry her. Farewell, ambitious dreams of struggle and privation! Farewell, oh glorious independent poverty! Farewell, my schemes and dreams! Bohemia, adventure, all!—and for what?

For an elderly woman for whom I did not care a rap, a faded woman with a ready-made family to boot. Truly life is one confounded scrape after another.

That night I dreamed of the terrible twins. I was a pirate ship, Ronnie, the captain, stood on my chest, while Lonnie, a naval lieutenant, tried to board me. Then they invented a new game, based on the Midnight Ride of Paul Revere. It was tremendously exciting. They both got quite worked up over it. So did I—only more so. I was the horse. I awoke bathed in perspiration, and hissing through my clenched teeth: "Never! Never!"

But really it seemed as if I must do something; so next day I began three different letters to Mrs. Fitz. I was sorely distracted. My work was suffering. There was the unfinished manuscript of *The Microbe* staring reproachfully at me. Then to crown all, just as I was sitting down in the early evening with grim determination to finish the letter, suddenly I was assailed by a Craving.

Indulgent Reader, up till now I have concealed it, but I must confess at last. I have one besetting weakness, a weakness that amounts to a vice. I am ashamed of it. Often I have tried to wean myself of it; often cursed the heredity that imposed it on me. Opium? Morphine? Cocaine? Nothing so fashionable. Absinthe? Brandy? Gin? Nothing so normal. Alas! let me whisper it in your ear: I am a Chewing Gum Fiend!

So feeling in my pocket for the stuff, and finding none, I straightway began to crave it as never before. Then, knowing there would be no peace for me, I left my letter and started desperately forth into that fog-stifled city.

And that fog was now a FOG. It irked the lungs, and made the eye-balls tingle. Each street lamp was a sulphurous blur, each radiant shop-

window a furtive blotch of light. It seemed something solid, something you could cut into slices, and serve between bread—a very Camembert cheese of a fog.

So into this woolly obscurity I plunged, and like a mackinaw blanket it entangled me about. Bleary boxes of light the tramways crawled along. There were tootings of taxis, curses of cabbies, clanging of bells. The streets were lanes of mystery, the passers weird shadows; the shop-windows seemed to be made of horn instead of glass. Then the green and red lights of a chemist's semaphored me, seemingly from a great distance, but really from just a few feet away. So there I bought six packets of chewing gum, and started home.

But at this point I found the fog fuzzier than ever. I stumbled and fumbled, and wondered and blundered, till presently I found myself standing before the great doors of a theatre. For the moment I was too discouraged to go further, and the performance was about to begin. Ha! that *was* an idea! I would enter. Then I groaned in spirit, for I saw that the theatre was Drury Lane. Sensational melodrama! Ah, no! Better the cold and cruel street. But the fog was inexorable. Three times did I try to break through it; three times did it hurl me back on the melodramatic mercies of Drury Lane.

Hanging over the front of the gallery, I asked myself: "Who are these hundreds of well-dressed people who fill this great playhouse? To all appearance they are intelligent beings, yet I cannot imagine intelligent beings taking this kind of thing seriously. As burlesque it's funny, and the more thrilling it gets the funnier it is. Yet, except myself, no one seems to laugh. How the author must have chuckled over its fabrication! However, let me credit him with one haunting line, one memorable

sentiment, delivered by the heroine to a roar of applause:

> A woman's most precious jewel is her good name,
> And her brightest crown the love of her husband!

Then suddenly a light flashed on me. It was these people who bought my books; it was this sort of thing I had been peddling to them so long. And they liked it. How they howled for more! "O ye gods of High Endeavour!" I groaned, "heap not my sins of melodrama on my head."

Conscience-stricken I did not wait for the climax where two airships grapple in the sky, under the guns of a "Dreadnought," while at a crossing an auto dashes into a night express. I sneaked out between the acts, and sought the solitude of the Thames Embankment.

The fog had cleared now, and the clock of St. Stephen's pealed till I counted the stroke of midnight. The wall of the Embankment was a barrier of grime, the river a thing of mystery and mud. It was a gruesome night. Even the huge electrically-limned Highlandman on the opposite shore, who drinks whisky with such enviable capacity, had ceased for the nonce his luminous libations.

A few human waifs shuffled past me, middle-aged men with faces pale as dough, and discouraged moustaches drooping over negligible chins. Their clothes, green with age and corroded with mud, seemed to flap emptily on their meagre frames. A woman separated herself from a mass of shadow, a miry-skirted scarecrow crowned with a broken bonnet. With one red claw she clutched a precious box of matches.

"For Gord's syke buy it orf me, mister. I ain't myde tupp'nce-oipney orl dye."

I left her staring at a silver coin and testing it with her teeth.

Yes, it was a bad night to be out in, a bad night to cower on these bitter benches waiting for the dawn. Yet I myself was conscious of the *chauffage central* of peripatetic philanthropy. Greedily I panted for other opportunities to enjoy the glow of giving. Then, as I was passing Cleopatra's Needle, I heard the sound of a woman's sob.

It came from the gloomy gruesomeness between the Needle and the Thames. I peered and listened. Below me the hideous river chuckled, and the lamplight fell lividly on the whiteness of a life-buoy bound to the wall. Again I was sure I heard that sound of piteous sobbing.

Bravery is often lack of imagination; I have imagination plus, so I hesitated. I had heard of men being lured into traps. Vividly enough I saw myself a *cadavre* drifting on the tide, and I liked not the picture. Yet after all it takes tremendous courage to be a coward, so I drew nearer. Strange! the sobbing, so low, so pitiful had ceased. It was followed by a silence far more sinister. There was a vibrating agony in that silence, a horrible, heart-clutching suspense. What if I were to go down there and find—no one? Yet someone had been, I would swear; someone had sobbed, and now—silence.

Slowly, slowly I descended the steps. There in the black shadow of the Needle I made little noise, yet—suddenly I began to wonder if all the world could not hear the beating of my heart. . . .

Heart be still! hand be steady! foot be swift! There, crouching on the top of the wall, gazing downward, ready for the leap, I see the figure of a woman. Will she jump before I can reach her? I hold my breath. Nearer I steal, nearer, nearer. Then—one swift rush—ah! I have her.

Even as I clutched I felt her weight sag towards the river. Another moment and I had dragged her back into safety. Tense and panting, I stared

at her; then, as the lamplight fell on her ghastly face I uttered a cry of amazement. Heavens above! it was the girl of the entomological meal-ticket, the persistent pedestrian of Tavistock Square.

There she cowered, looking at me with great, terror-dilated eyes. There I glowered, regarding her grimly enough. At last I broke the silence.

"Child! Child! why did you do it? You've gone and spoilt my story. I should never have met you like this. It's coincidence. Coincidence, you know, can't happen in fiction, only in real life. You can't be fiction now. You'll have to be real life."

She gazed at me blankly. Against the green of the wall her face was a vague splash of white.

"But that is a matter with which I can scarcely reproach you. What I would like to know is why were you on the top of that wall? Having severely strained my right arm, I conceive I am entitled to an explanation."

She did not make an effort to supply one, so after pause I continued:

"No doubt you will say it was because you were tired, hungry, homeless. Because you thought the river kinder than the cruel world. Because you said: 'Death is better than dishonour!'"

The girl nodded vaguely.

"Ah, no!" I said sadly; "you must not say these things, for if you do you will be quoting word for word the heroine of my novel, *A Shirtmaker's Romance*. You will be guilty of plagiarism, my child; and what's worse, a thousand times worse, you will be guilty of melodrama."

She looked at me as if she thought me mad, then a shudder convulsed her, and breaking away, she dashed down the steps to that black water. Just in time I caught her and dragged her back. She shrank against the wall, hiding her face, sobbing violently.

"Please, don't," I entreated. "If you want to

give me a chance of doing the rescuing hero business choose a less repellent evening, and water not so like an animated cesspool. Now, listen to me."

Her sobbing ceased. She was a silent huddle of black against the wall.

"I am," I said, "a waif like yourself, homeless, hungry, desperate. I came to this city to win fame and fortune. Poor dreaming fool! Little did I know that where one wins a thousand fail. Well, I've struggled, starved even as you've done; but I've made up my mind to suffer no more. And so to-night I've come down here, even as you've done, to end it all."

I had her listening now. From the white mask of her face her big eyes devoured me.

"Yes, my poor girl," I went on wearily, "you're right. Life for such as us is better ended. Defeated, desperate, what is there left for us but death? Let us then die together; but not your way—no, that's too primitive. I have another, more fascinating, more original. Ah! even in self-destruction, behold in me the artist. And I am going to allow you to share my doom. Nay! do not trouble to express your gratitude. I understand; it's too deep for words. And now, just excuse me one moment. I will prepare."

With that I went over to the base of the Needle and taking from my pocket the five remaining packets of chewing gum, I tore the paper from them. Then with the large piece I had been masticating I welded them into a solid stick about six inches long. Eagerly I returned to her.

"There!" I cried triumphantly. "Do you know what this grey stick is? But why should you? Well, let me tell you. This dull, sugary-looking stuff is *dynamite*, dynamite in its most concentrated form. This is a stick of the terrific PEPSINITE. It has moved more than any explosive known. Now do you understand?"

Her eyes were rivetted on the little grey stick.

"Ah, well may you shudder, girl! There's enough in this tiny piece to blow a score of us to atoms, to bring this mighty monument careening down, to make the embankment look like an excavation for the underground railway. Oh, is it not glorious? Pepsinite!"

Still looking at it as if fascinated, she made a movement of utter alarm.

"Just think of it," I whispered gloatingly. "In two more minutes we shall be launched into eternity. Does that not thrill you with rapture? And think of our revenge! Here with our death we will destroy their monument, hard as their hearts, black as their selfishness, sharp as their scorn. It, too, will be blown to pieces."

She looked up at the black column almost as if she were sorry for it. I laughed harshly.

"Yes, I know. You do not hate the Needle, but just think of the people who are so proud of it, the devils who have goaded us to this. At first I thought that with my death I would destroy their Albert Memorial, and so break their Philistine hearts. But that would have taken so much pepsinite, and I have only this pitiful piece. So it had to be the Needle."

Again she seemed almost to regret its impending doom.

"And, now," I cried, "the time has come. Oh, curse you, curse you, vast vain-glorious city! Under the Upas window of your smoke what dreams have withered, what idols turned to clay! How many hearts of splendid pride have failed and fallen! How many poets cursed thy publishers and died! Oh heedless, heartless London!"

With a gesture full of noble scorn I shook my fist in the direction of the Savoy Hotel. Then I changed to another key.

"But no, let me not curse you, great city! Here

at the gateway of death let me envisage you again, and from the depths of the heart you have broken say to you sadly: 'London, ruthless, splendid London, I forgive!'"

My hand quivered as I laid the grey stick at the base of the monument; my hand trembled as I planted a large wax match in it; my hand positively shook as I struck another match and applied a light to the upright one. With eyes dilated I stared at the tiny flickering flame, and at that moment, so worked up was I, I will swear I thought I was looking at the very flame of death.

"Come closer, closer girl," I gasped. "See it burning down, down. Soon it will reach the end and we will know nothing. Oh is it not glorious—nothing! Good-bye world, good-bye life . . . see! it is nearly half way. Oh gracious flame, burn faster, faster yet! And now, girl, standing here in the shadow of death do not refuse my last request; let me kiss you once, just once upon your brow."

For answer she stooped swiftly and blew out the match.

CHAPTER X

THE YOUNG MAN WHO MAKES GOOD

"WHY did you do it?" I demanded angrily. "Why couldn't we have gone through with it?"

Then for the first time the girl seemed to find her voice, and it was a very faint voice indeed.

"No, no, I could not. For myself it does not mattaire; but you, monsieur—that's different."

Again I was struck with her foreign intonation, her pretty precision with which Frenchwomen speak English, the deliberate utterance due to an effort, not wholly successful, to avoid zeeing and zizzing.

"Why is it so different?" I asked sulkily.

"Because—because me, I am nossing. If I die no persons will care; but you, monsieur, you are artist, you are poet. You have many beautiful sings to do in life. Ah, monsieur! have courage, courage. Promise me you nevaire do it some more."

"All right," I said gloomily, "I promise."

She seemed reassured. Her child's face as she looked at me was full of pity and sympathy.

"And now," I said, "what's to be done?"

"I do not know."

She shrugged her shoulders helplessly. All at once a look of terror came into her face. Fearfully she peered over my shoulder, then she cowered back in the shadow of the wall.

"Oh, I'm 'fraid, I'm 'fraid."

Involuntarily I turned in the direction of her stare, but saw no one.

"What are you afraid of?" I asked. "What's the trouble?"

"It's Monsieur O'Flazzaire! Oh, I am bad,

bad girl! Why you not let me die? I have keel, I have keel."

"Good Heavens! You haven't killed Professor O'Flather?"

"No, no, but I have keel ze troupe; Batsheba, all, all; dead, keel by my hand, keel in revenge. Oh, I am so wicked! I hate myself."

I stared at her. "In the name of Heaven, what have you done?"

For answer she pulled from the pocket of her mantle a tin canister of fair size and handed it to me. By the lamplight I could just make out the label:

SKEETER'S INSECT POWDER.

A light dawned on me. "You don't mean to say you've fed 'em on this?"

"Yes, yes, all of eet. I have spare nossing. I was mad. Oh, I 'ate heem so! And now I'm 'fraid. If he finds me he will keel me, certainly. He's bad man. Oh, don't let heem find me!"

She clutched my arm in her terror.

"Don't worry," I assured her. "But, first, let's destroy the evidence of your crime."

I flung the canister into the river, where we heard a faint splash.

"Now," I went on, "you're no doubt cold and hungry. Let me take you to the coffee-stall on the Embankment and give you some supper. Then, according to the custom of the situation, you may tell me the sad story of your life. In the meantime, as we walk there, let's hear how you fixed O'Flather."

"It is true, what I tell you, Monsieur; he's very, very bad man. He 'ave said the things disgusting to me, and he try to make me have dinner wiz heem many hevenings, but I say: No! No! Because truly, I have 'orror for such mans. Den last night he tell me if I don' come wiz heem, he don' want me some more. He refuse pay me my money, and

the lady where I rest tell me : ' You don't come back some more wiz no money.' So what I must do ? I have no 'ome, and just one sheeling of money. Ah, no ! It was not interesting for me, truly."

She shook her head with all the painful resignation of the poor.

" Well, I am desperate. I sink it is all finish for me. I must drink of the gran' cup at last. That make me sad, because I have fight so long. But there ! It is the life, is it not ? Then I sink I have one gran' revenge. I buy wiz my sheeling dat powdaire, and I go to the exposition. There was only the Japonaise girl, and she leave me wiz the troupe. They lie on their backs and they wait for *déjeuner*. Well, I geeve them such as I don' sink they want eat ever again. Oh, I 'ate them so, and I 'ate heem so, and so I keel them every one wiz that powdaire, till zere legs don' wave some more. Even ze wild ones, they don' jump some more now."

" Poor Bathsheba ! "

" Then when I finish keel the last one the Japonaise girl come and scream for the patron, and I run like wind. But I know he fetch everywhere for me, and when he find me he keel me too. Anyway, I was tire, and I despair, so I sink I throw myself in the water. There ! "

" Well, you must swear you won't do it again."

" Yes, I swear on the head of my fazzaire, I won't do it again."

" And now for that coffee, coffee and sandwiches—ham sandwiches."

She ate and drank eagerly, yet always with that furtive, hunted look, as if she expected to see the huge bulldog face of O'Flather with its mane of brindled hair come snarling out of the gloom. I saw, too, that she was regarding me with great interest and curiosity, indeed with a certain maternal and protecting air, odd in one so childish and clinging

herself. Once, seeing that I shivered a little, she turned up the collar of my coat and buttoned it. In spite of the mothering gentleness of the act I might have thought it a little "forward," had I not remembered that in her eyes we were comrades in misfortune.

Her eyes! How blue and bright they were now, as they regarded me over her coffee! And how long, I wondered, had that wistful mouth been a stranger to smiles?

"Let me see you smile," I begged.

I thought so. A flash of teeth that made me think of an advertising poster for a popular dentifrice. Again I noted the darkness of her hair, setting off the porcelain whiteness of her skin. Again I approved of the full forehead, and the frank eyebrows. Again the girl stirred me strangely. And to think that she might have been at the bottom of that hideous river by now! I felt a sudden pity for her, and a wish to shield her from further ill.

"And now for the story," I said, as she finished. "I have told you mine, you know."

"Ah, mine! It is not so interesting. There is not much to tell. My fazzaire die when I was leetle girl, and I go to the convent. There I learn to do the *hem-broderie*, and when I leave the Sisters I work in atelier in Paris. It was so hard. We work from eight by the morning till seven at night. There was t'irty girl all in one leetle room, and some girls was *poitrinaire*."

"What's that?"

"Ah . . . what you call it—yes, consumption. Well, I begin to become that no more can I stand it, so I come to Londres and try to get work. Every day I try so 'ard for one month, for I can speak English not much. Then just as I have no money I get work in atelier at the *hem-broderie*. It was not so 'ard as in Paris, and I was very 'appy. But pretty soon I am seek, and it is necessaire I go to the

hospital. It was the appendicite. When I get out I try to get back to the atelier, but my place have been fill. No work, no money—truly, I have no chance."

"Well, what happened then?"

"Ah! then it was not interesting. I often go very hungry. I live for many days on bread, just bread. But by and by I get more work. Then again I am very 'appy. But I have no chance. I become seek once more. I have headache very much; my hair tumble out, and every night I cry. But I try very 'ard. I must keep my work, I must, I must. Then the doctor tell me I must have more air. I must *respire*. I tell him it is not for the poor to *respire*, and he say you must do something outside, or you will die. Well, I leave the atelier and for two months I fetch somesing outside. But I have no chance. Once more my money is finish, then one day I get work with Monsieur O'Flazzaire. I would not have taken it, but that I am starve, and I am 'fraid. It was so 'ard, and every day I get more weak. Then, yesterday, he tell me: 'Go! I don' pay you,'—and I don' care for myself any more."

"Why," I said gravely, looking her in the face, "did you not do as others would have done?"

She stared at me in a startled way: "What is that, Monsieur?"

"Sell yourself."

"Ah, no! *mon camarade*—you do not mean that."

"Is it not better to do that than starve?"

"It is better to die than to do that, I sink. I am good Catholic, Monsieur."

"Do not call me Monsieur! Are we not fellow waifs? So you think it is less sin to take your own life than to sell your honour?"

"It is that that I think, Monsieur."

As I looked into the steady, blue eyes I saw a

look of faith that almost amounted to fanaticism, a sort of Joan of Arc look. How curious! I thought; I was under the impression such sentiments were confined to books. However, I determined to fall back on cynicism, and to seem the more cynical I lit a cigarette. She watched me with a curious intensity; and as she stood there quietly, a naphtha lamp lit up her pale, earnest face.

"Ah! young lady," I remarked mockingly, "you speak like a penny novelette. In fact, you say the same thing as did my heroine Monica Klein in *A Shirt-maker's Romance.* It only remains for you to die to slow music in the snow outside the door of a fashionable church. That's what happened to Monica. I shed a bucket of tears as I wrote that scene. But I thought we had decided you were to be Fact not Fiction?"

"I do not understand, Monsieur."

"Then let me explain. Idealism is a luxury we poor people can't afford. If you should be forced to sell yourself for bread, lives there a man that would dare blame you? You would be as good as the purest woman, even though you walk the streets. Nay! I'm not sure that you wouldn't be better because you would be a victim, a sacrifice, a martyr. No, you're wrong, mademoiselle. It's every woman's right to live, even in shame."

"It is easy to die; it must be 'ard to live like zat."

"How lucky you find it so easy to die. Me, I'd rather be a live lackey than a dead demi-god. But let me tell you you won't get much credit in this world for dying in the cause of virtue, and I have my doubts about the next. And it doesn't seem to me to make much odds whether you die quickly, as you intended doing a little while ago, or whether you die slowly by hard work and poor living. Society's going to do for you anyway. You're Waste, that's what you are. In every process there must be

waste, even in the civilising one. You're going to be swept into the rubbish heap pretty soon. Poor pitiful Waste! What do you mean to do now?"

Her face fell sullenly. She would not look at me any more, but she answered bravely enough.

"Me! Oh, I suppose I try again. Perhaps I starve. Perhaps I find work. Anyway, I fight."

"What chance have you got—a poor physique, hard toil, bad air, cheap food. You'll go on fighting till you fall, then no one will care. If it's fighting you're after, why don't you fight Society, fight with your women's weapons, your allure, your appeal to the animalism of man. Damn the world. Sell yourself, but—make the price high; drive hard bargains, use judgment, guard the spoil. Do as I would in your case, as every man would if he had the cursed ill-luck to be a woman. Then, when you're sixty you can turn respectable and have a pew in church, instead of rotting at thirty in Potter's Field."

"You advice me like zat?" I could feel that she shrank from me.

"Doesn't it seem good, practical advice?"

"Suppose no one want buy me?"

"True. There's many a woman guarding ever so jealously a jewel no man wants to steal. That's almost more bitter than having it stolen. However, don't you worry. You'll find plenty of buyers."

She raised her head which had been down-hung Intently, oddly she looked at me.

"Will you buy me?" she said suddenly.

"Me!" I laughed. "Why no! I'm speaking as one wastrel to another. How could I?"

"Would you if you could?"

"Well, er—I don't think so. You see—I'm not that sort."

"No, I knew you were not," she said slowly. "You're good man."

"I'm not," I protested indignantly. How one

hates to be called "good"—especially if one is a woman.

"Yes you are," she insisted. Then she threw back her head with a certain fine pride, and the dark sea-blue eyes were unfathomable.

"You have saved my life. It is yours now. Will you not take me? I am good girl. I have always been serious, I have always been virtuous. I will work hard for you. I will help you while you are so poor; zen if one day you are become rich, famous, and you are tire of me, I will go away."

I was taken aback. If there's one thing worse than to be convicted of vice it's to be convicted of virtue. I squirmed, stammered, shuffled.

"Well, you see I—— Hang it all! somewhere in my make-up there's that uncomfortable possession, a Puritan conscience. I'm sorry—let me consider . . . Perhaps there's another way."

How terrible to a woman to have the best she has to offer refused; but the girl bore up bravely.

"What is it?" she asked, without any particular interest.

I was doing some rapid thinking. An idea had come into my head which startled me. It was an inspiration, a solution of a pressing problem. Swiftly I decided.

"To do as you suggest," I said, "would be very wrong, and, what's worse, it would be crudely conventional. It is so commonplace to live with a person without marrying them; the original thing's to marry them. Well, will you marry me?"

She looked at me incredulously. I went on calmly.

"But for me, as you say, your troubles would by now have been over. In a way I'm responsible for your life. What's to be done. I'm not old enough to adopt you, and to constitute myself your guardian would lay me open to uncharitable suspicion. From now on I know I shall be infernally worried about you.

Well, the easiest way out of the difficulty seems to be to marry you, doesn't it ? "

" But you don't know me," she gasped.

" You've got ' nothing on me ' there," I said airily. " You don't know me. That's precisely what makes it so interesting. Any man can marry a woman he knows ; it takes an original to marry one he doesn't. But, after all, has not the method some merit ? We start with no illusions. There will be no eye-opening process, no finding our swans geese. The beauty of such a marriage is that we don't entirely ring down the curtain on romance."

" But—I have no money."

" Neither have I. What does that matter. Any fool can marry if he's got money ; it takes a brave man to do it if he's broke."

" But—— "

" Not another word. It's all settled. I think it's a splendid idea. We'll be married to-morrow if possible. I'll get a licence at once. By the way, what's your name ? It's of no consequence, you know, but I fancy it's necessary for the licence."

" Anastasia Guinoval."

" Thank you. Now I'll take you to where you live, and you must accept a little money to satisfy your landlady. To-morrow I'll call for you. Hold on a minute—as we're affianced, seems to me we ought to kiss ? "

" I—don't know."

" Yes, I believe it's customary." I pecked at her lightly in the dark. " Now, you understand we're making a real sensible marriage, without any sentimental nonsense about it. You understand I'm not a sentimental man. I hate sentiment."

" I understand," she said doubtfully.

As we moved away, up there in the dark that great sonorous bell boomed the stroke of one. Only an hour, yet how busy had the fates been on my particular account ! In what ludicrous ways had

they worked out their design ! On what trivial things does destiny seem to hinge ! Ah ! Who shall say what is trivial ?

On reaching my room my first act was to take up my half-finished letter to Mrs. Fitz. I read the words : " If ever we should find ourselves free to marry, you promised you would send for me."

" Good ! " I cried exultantly. " She will find herself free to marry all right, but I won't ; that is, I hope I won't after to-morrow. Whoever could have guessed the motive behind my apparently rash proposal. To avoid one marriage I stake my chances on another. Well that settles things as far as Mrs. Fitz is concerned. Ronnie and Lonnie, I defy you."

So I tore my letter into small pieces with a vast satisfaction, and I was proceeding to tear also the luckless copy of the *Gotham Gazette* when I paused. I had not noticed that the fateful paragraph, begun near the bottom of a page, was continued on the next. Again I read :

> " . . . when the nearest spectators could reach him to rescue him from his perilous position they found to their surprise that the man was dead . . ."

Quickly I turned over the page ; then I gave a gasp, for this was the continuation :

> " . . . to the world. The gallant captain had been imbibing not wisely but too well, and when aroused after some difficulty, claimed that he had a right to sleep there if he chose. It was only after much argument and resistance that he was finally persuaded to accompany an officer to the police station."

" Of all the—— "

Words failed me at this point. I plumped down on my chair and sat as if paralysed. And after all the captain was not dead—only dead drunk, and my brilliant effort to avoid marrying his widow had been entirely unnecessary. Then after all I was a fool.

Well, it was too late to find it out. At least I never went back on my word. I must go through with the other business.

"Anastasia Guinoval! Hum! maybe it'll turn out all right. Time will show. Anyway—it will be a good chance to learn French."

And with this comforting reflection I went to bed.

End of Book I

BOOK II—THE STRUGGLE

CHAPTER I

THE NEWLY-WEDS

It was nearly a week before I recovered from the surprise of my sudden marriage.

As far as the actual ceremony went it seemed as if I were the person least concerned. One, James Horace Madden, was tying himself in the most awkward manner to a member of the opposite sex, a slight, pale, neatly-dressed girl whose lucent blue eyes were already beginning to regard him with positive adoration. The said James Horace Madden, a tall, absent-minded young man, stared about him continually. He was, indeed, more like a curious and amused spectator than a principal in the affair, and it was nearly over before he decided to become interested in it.

Well, I was married, so they told me, as they shook my hand ; and I had a wife, so she assured me as she clung lightly to my arm. She seemed extravagantly happy. When I saw she was so happy I was glad I had married her. To tell the truth, I had almost backed out The inconsiderateness of Captain Fitzbarrington in not dying had hurt my feelings and aroused in me a resentment against Fate. In the end, however, good nature prevailed. I believe I am good-natured enough to marry a dozen women should occasion demand.

We had not been wed five minutes before Anastasia developed an extraordinary capacity for unreserved affection. I have never been capable of unreserved affection, not even for myself ; but I can appreciate it in others, particularly if I am the object of it.

She also developed such a morbid fear of the infuriate O'Flather that on my suggesting we spend our honeymoon in Paris her enthusiasm was almost grotesque. When we arrived at the Gare du Nord I believe she could have knelt down and kissed the very stones.

And to tell the truth my own delight was hardly less restrained. There's only one mood in which to approach Paris—Rhapsody. So for ten marvellous days I rhapsodized. The fact that I was on a honeymoon seemed trivial compared with my presence in the most adorable of cities. Truly my bride had reason to be jealous of this Paris, and, as she was given that way, doubtless she would have been had not she herself loved so well.

But there was another matter to distract me: had I not a new part to play. As a young married man it behoved me, in the first place, to acquire a certain seriousness and weight. After due reflexion I decided to give up the flippant cigarette and take to the more dignified pipe. So I made myself a present of a splendid meerschaum, and getting Anastasia to encase the bowl in a flannel jacket I began to colour it.

Imagine me, then, on a certain snappy morning of late December, nursing my flannel-clad meerschaum as I swing jauntily along the Quai des Tournelles. Seasonable weather! the brilliant sunshine playing on the Seine with all the glitter of cutlery; beyond the splendid stride of steel between the two Iles, the Hotel de Ville; to the left the hideous Morgue; beyond that, again, the grey glory of Notre Dame its bone-blanched buttresses like the ribs of some uncouth monster, its two blunt towers like time-worn horns, its gargoyles etched in ebon black against the sky.

"After all," I am reflecting, "the advantages of marrying a person one does not know are sufficiently obvious. Then there is no bitterness of disillusion-

ment, no chagrin of being found out. What woman can continue to idealize an unshaven man in pyjamas? What man can persist in adoring a female in a peignoir with her hair concentrated into knots? In good truth we never marry the person with whom we go through the wedding ceremony: it's always someone else."

Here I pause to stare appreciatively at the Fontaine St. Michel, amid whose icicles the sunbeams play at hide-and-seek. Then I watch the steam of a tug which the sunshine tangles in fleeces of gold amid the bare branches of a *marronnier;* after which in the same zestful way I regard a hearty man on a sand-barge toasting some beef on a sharpened stick over a fire. Suddenly these humble things seem to become alive with interest for me.

"Yes," I continue, "love is an intoxicant, marriage the most effective of soberers. It is a part of life's discipline, a bachelor's punishment for his sins, a life-long argument in which one is wise to choose an opponent one can out-voice. How the fictitious values of courtship are discounted in the mart of matrimony! It makes philosophers of us all. Having been a benedict three weeks, of course I know everything about it."

The long slate-grey façade of the Louvre is sun-radiant, and like a point of admiration rears the Tower St. Jacques. Looking down the shining river the arches of the many bridges interlock like lace-work, and like needles the little steamers dart gleaming through. The graceful river and the gleaming quays laugh in the sunshine, and as I look at them my heart laughs too.

"But," I go on musingly, "to marry someone you don't know, someone who has never inspired you with mad dreams, never lived for you in the glamour of romance: surely that is ideal. You have no illusions; her virtues as well as her faults are all to discover. Take my own case. So far,

I haven't discovered a single fault. My wife adores me. She can scarcely bear me out of her sight. Even now I know she's anxiously awaiting my return; imagines I may have been run over by a taxi, and then arrested by a policeman for getting in its way. Or else I have a *maitresse*. Frequently she shows signs of jealousy, and I've been away over an hour. Really I must hurry home to reassure her."

With that I pass under the arch of the Institute, and turn up the rue de Seine. I glance with eager interest at the gorgelike rue Visconti; I itch to turn over the folios before the doors of the art dealers, but on I go stubbornly till I come to a doorway bearing the sign:

HÔTEL DU MONDE ET DU MOZAMBIQUE.

A certain tenebrous suggestion in the vestibule seems to account for the latter part of the title. It is a tall, decrepid building that at some time had been sandwiched between two others of more stalwart bearing who now support it. It consists chiefly of a winding stairway lit by lamps of oil. At every stage two rooms seem to happen; but they are so small as to appear accidental.

So up this precipitous stairway lightly I leap till I come to the third storey. There before a yellow door I knock three times.

"Come in!" cries a joyful voice, and I enter to find two soft arms around my neck, and two soft lips upheld expectantly.

"Hullo, Little Thing," I shout cheerily.

"Oh, darleen, why you not come before? You affright me. I sink you have haxident, and I am *anxieuse*."

"No, no, I've only been gone an hour. I've had several narrow escapes, though. Nearly got blown into the Seine, was attacked by an apache

in the Avenue de l'Opera, and, stepping off the pavement to avoid going under a ladder, was knocked down by a taxi. But no bones broken ; got home at last."

" Ah ! you laugh ; but me, I wait here and I sink all time you was keel. Oh, darleen ! if you was keel I die too."

" Nonsense ! You'd make rather a jolly little widow. Well, what else have you been doing, besides worrying about me ? "

" Oh, I make blouse. I sink it will be very pretty. You will see."

" All right, we'll put it on and go to the opera to-night."

The " opera " is a cinema house near the Place St. Michel, where we go on rainy evenings, usually in our oldest clothes, and joking merrily about opera cloaks and evening dress.

" See ! Isn't it nice ? "

She holds up a shimmering sketch in silk and pins. " It's the chiffon you geeve me. But you must not spend your money like that. You spoil me."

" Not at all. But talking about money reminds me : I got my English gold changed to-day. Now, let's form a committee of ways and means. Here is all that lies between you and me and the wolf."

I throw a wad of flimsy French bills on the table.

" A thousand francs ! Now that's got to last us till some editor realises that certain gems of literature signed ' Silenus Starset ' are worth real money."

" Oh, they are loovely, darleen, your writings. No one will refuse articles so beautiful."

" My dear, you can't conceive the intensity of editorial obfustication. I fear we've got to retrench. You must make the economies.' "

" Yes, yes, that is easy for me. I know nussing but make the economies. You see it is the

chance often if I have anysing to make the economies on."

"Good! Well, the first thing is to get out of this hotel. We can't afford palatial luxury at five francs a day?"

And here I look with some distaste at the best bedroom the Hotel du Monde et du Mozambique affords. I see a fat, high bed of varnished pine, on which reposes a bloated crimson quilt. On the mantelpiece a glass bell enshrines a clock of gilt and chocolate-coloured marble. There is a paunchy, inhospitable chair of green plush, and two of apologetic cane. An oval table is covered by a fringe cloth of crimson velour, and there is a mirror in two sections, which, by an ingenious system of distortion immediately makes one hate oneself—one either looks mentally abnormal, or about as intelligent as a caveman.

"In truth," I observe, "the decorative scheme of our apartment puzzles me. Whether it is Empire or Louis Quinze I cannot decide. Really, we must seek something less complex."

She looks at the money thoughtfully. "We might take a *logement*. Already have I think of it. To-day I have ask Madame who keep the hotel, and she tell me zere is one very near—rue Mazarin. The rent is five hundred by year. Perhaps it is too much," she adds timidly.

"No, I think we might give that. We pay three months in advance I suppose. Allow other three hundred francs for furnishing—do you think we could manage on that?"

She looks doubtful. "Not very nice; but we will do for the best. I will be so careful."

"Oh, we'll arrange somehow. We'll then have five hundred francs for food and other things. We must make that last for three months. By that time I'm sure to be making something out of my writings. Five hundred francs for

two people for three months isn't much, is it ? "

" No, but we will take very much care, darleen. I do not care for myself ; it is only for you."

" Don't lose any sleep over me. I'll be all right if you will. It will be real fun scheming and dreaming, and making the best of everything. We'll see how much happiness we can squeeze out of every little sou ; we'll get to know the joys and sorrows of the poor. They say that Bohemia is vanished ; but we'll prove that wherever there is striving and the happy heart in spite of need, wherever there is devotion to art in the face of poverty, there eternally is Bohemia. Hurrah ! how splendid to be young and poor and to have our dreams ! "

I laugh exultantly, and the girl enters into my joyous mood.

" Yes," she says, " we shall be gay. As for me, I will buy a *métier*. I will work at my *hem-broderie*. I will make leetle money like that. Oh, not much, but it will assist. So we will be all right."

" Yes," I cry, enamoured of the vision. " And when success does come, how we will glory in it ! How good will seem the feast after the fast ! Ah ! but sometimes, when we have our house near the Bois, will we not look back with regret to the days when we struggled and rejoiced there in our tiny Mansard of Dreams ? "

I pause for a moment, while my kinematographic imagination begins to work. I go on dramatically :

" Then some day of December twilight, when the snow is falling, I will steal away from the flunkies and the marble halls, and go down to look at the old windows now so blind and dead. And as I stand wrapped in mournful reverie and a five hundred franc overcoat, suddenly I hear a soft step. There in the dusk I am aware of a shadowy form also gazing up at the poor old windows.

Lo! it is you, and there are tears in your eyes. You too have slipped away from the marble halls to sentimentalise over the old home. Then we embrace, and, calling the limousine, whirl off to dinner at the Café de la Paix. . . . But that reminds me—let's go to *déjeuner*. Where shall it be—*chez* Voisin, Foyet, or—Laperouse?"

It turns out to be at the sign of the Golden Snail in the neighbourhood of the Markets, where for one franc seventy-five we have an elaborate choice of *hors-d'œuvres*, some meat that we strongly suspect to be horse, big white beans, a bludgeon of highly-glazed bread, a wedge of mould-sheathed Camembert (which she eats with joy, but which I cannot be induced to touch), and some purple wine that puts my teeth on edge. Yet, as I sit there with a large damp napkin on my knee and my feet in the saw-dust of the floor, I am superlatively happy.

"It is very extravagant," I say, as I recklessly order coffee. "You know there are places where we can have *déjeuner* for one franc fifty, or even for one franc twenty-five. Just think of it! We might have saved a whole franc on this meal."

"We save much more than that, when we have *ménage*. It will cost so little then. You will see."

"Will it really? Come on, then, and let's have a look at your apartment. It may be taken just ten minutes before we get there. They always are."

Off we go as eager as children, and with rising excitement we reach the mouldering rue Mazarin. We reconnoitre a gloomy-looking building entered by a massive, iron-studded door. Through a tunnel-like porch-way we see a tiny court, in the centre of which is a railed space about six feet square. Within it stand a few pots of dead geraniums and a weather-stained plaster-cast of Bellona, thus achieving an atmosphere of both nature and art.

The corpulent concierge emerges from her cubby

hole. Yes, she will show us the apartment. There has been a Monsieur to see it that very morning. He has been undecided whether to take it or not, but will let her know in the morning.

This makes us keen to secure it, and it is almost with a determination to be pleased that we mount five flights of dingy stairs. A faded carpet accompanies us as far as the fourth flight, then deserts us in disgust.

Nothing damps our ardour, however. We decide that the smallness of the two rooms is a decided advantage, the view into the mildewed court quaint and charming, the fact that water is obtained from a common tap on the landing no particular detriment. The girl, pleased that I am pleased, becomes enthusiastic. It will be her first home. Her heart warms to it. Scant as it is, no other will ever be quite so dear. With the eye of fancy she sees its bareness clad and comforted. Poor lonely house! Seeing the light ashine in the wistful blue eyes, I too become enthusiastic, and thus we inspire each other.

"It's a dear little apartment," I say. "How lucky we are to have stumbled on it. I'm going to take it at once. We'll pay the first quarter's rent right now."

"You must geeve somesing to the concierge," she whispers as I pay.

"Ah, I see! a sop to Cerberus. All right."

"How much you geeve?"

"Twenty francs."

"Mon Dieu! Twenty francs! Ten was enough. She sink now we are made of money."

Anastasia is always ready to remind me that we have entered on a *régime* of economy. She seems to have made up her mind that, like all Americans, I have no idea of the value of money, and that as a thrifty and prudent woman of the most thrifty and prudent race in the world, it behooves her to

keep a close hand on the purse strings. I am just like a child, she decides, and she must look after me like a mother.

What a busy week it is! She takes into her own hands the furnishing of our home, calculating every sou, pondering every detail. Time after time we prowl past the furnishing shops on the Avenue du Maine, trying to decide what we had best take. There is a novel pleasure in this. Thus I am absurdly pleased when, on our deciding to take a table at twenty-two francs, I find a place where I can buy exactly the same for twenty-one.

We save money on the cleaning of the house by doing it ourselves. There is the floor to wax and polish. For the latter operation I sit down on a pad of several thicknesses of flannel, then she, catching my feet, pulls me around on the slippery surface till it shines like a mirror. We are very proud of that glossy floor, and regard our work almost with reverence, stepping on it as one might the sacred carpet of Mecca.

Then comes the furnishing. First, there is the bedroom. We buy two little beds of the fold-up variety, and set them side by side. Our bedding, though only of cotton, is, we decide, softer and nicer than linen and wool; and the pink quilt that covers both beds, could, we declare, scarce be told from silk. Our wardrobe—what is easier than to make a broad shelf about six feet high, and hang from it chintz curtains behind which a dozen hooks are screwed into the wall.

Equally simple are our other arrangements. A cosy corner can be deftly made of boards and cushions. She insists on me buying a superannuated arm-chair, and she re-covers it, so that it looks like new. She selects cheap but dainty curtains, a pretty table-cloth to hide the rough table, so that you'd never know; a little buffet, a mirror for the bedroom, pictures for the walls, kitchen things, table things—

really, it's awful how much you require for a *ménage*, and how quickly in spite of yourself your precious money melts.

These are the merry days, but at last all is finished —the first home. What if we have exceeded the margin a little? everything is really cosy and comforting.

"This is an occasion," I say. "Let us celebrate it."

In our little stove, heated to a cherry glow, we roast our maiden chicken. The first time we put it on the table it is not quite enough done. We peer at it anxiously, we probe at it cautiously, finally we decide to put it back for another quarter of an hour. But then—ye gods! What a bird! How plump and brown and savoury! How it sizzles in the amber gravy! Never, think we, have we tasted fowl so delicious. We eat it with reverence.

After that she makes one of the seven-and-thirty salads of that land of salads; then we have a dish of *petits pois*, and we finish off with a great golden *brioche* and red currant jam.

"Now," I say, "we'll drink to ourselves, and to our 'appy 'ome; and, by the gods, we'll drink in champagne!"

With that I triumphantly produce a half-bottle of *Mousseux* that I have been hiding, a graceful bottle with a cap of gold. Appalling extravagance! *Veuve Amiot!* Who could tell it from *Veuve Clicquot?*—and it costs only a franc and a half.

Cut the wire! Watch the cork start up, slowly, slowly . . . then—pop! away it springs, and smacks the ceiling. Quickly I fill her a foaming glass, and we drink to "La France." After that, sitting over the fire, we plunge long spongy biscuits into the bubbling wine that seems to seethe in fierce protest at being thus tormented. And if you do not think we are as happy as the joyous liquor we sip, you

do not know Youth and Paris. To conclude the evening, we scurry off to the Cinema theatre as merry as children.

Most of the films are American, and what is my amazement to find that one of them, all cowboys, breeze, and virtue rewarded, is a cinematisation of my own book, *Rattlesnake Ranch.* Yes, there are my characters—the sheriff's daughter, Mike the Mule-skinner, and the rest. A thrill runs down my back, almost a shiver.

" How do you like it ? " I ask the girl.

" I love it. I love all sings Americaine now."

" Really, it's awful rubbish. You mustn't judge America by things like that."

" I love it," she protests stoutly.

We get home quite tired ; but after she has gone to bed, I get out my pen and plunge into a new article. It is called, *How to be a Successful Wife.*

CHAPTER II

THAT MUDDLE-HEADED SANTA CLAUS

In the morning Anastasia always has her *ménage* to do. She sweeps till the parquet is like a mirror, and dusts till not a speck can you find from floor to ceiling. No priest could take his ministrations more seriously than Anastasia her daily routine as a *femme d'intérieur*, and on these occasions she makes me feel negligible to the point of humility. So I kiss her, and after being duly inspected and adjured to take precious care of myself, I am permitted to depart.

Oh, these morning walks! How this Paris inspires and exalts me! The year is closing with a seasonable brilliancy of starry nights and diamond-bright mornings. How radiant the sunshine seems as I emerge from our gloomy porchway, with its prison-like gate! The gaunt rue Mazarin is a lane of light, and the ancient houses, with their inscriptions of honourable service seem to smile in every wrinkle. Each has a character of its own. There are some that step disdainfully back from their fellows, and there are quaint roofs and unexpected, pokey little windows, and a dilapidated irregularity that takes one back to the days of swashbuckling romance.

At the end of the street I stop to give a penny to the blind man who stamps his cold feet and holds out his red hand. On this particular morning he stamps a little more vigorously than usual, and the red hand is so numb that it seems insensible to the touch of the copper coin. The Seine flashes with light. Upholstered with its long, slim quays, it looks more than ever gilt and gracious. Yes, it is cold. The darting *bâteaux-mouche* are icicle-fringed, and

the guardians of the few book-bins that are open are muffled to the ears. I wear no coat, because, except for my old mackintosh, I do not possess one. I have, however, bought a long muffler which I wind around my throat, and allow to flutter behind. People look oddly at me ; because, where the world wears a coat, the coatless man becomes a mark.

From the Pont des Arts the river is yellow in colour and seethes with slush ice. The sun is poised above the Institute, whose dome is black against the sky. The Ile de la Cite is a wedge of high grey houses that seem to pierce the Pont-Neuf bridge, and protrude in a green point, dominated by an enormous tree, through whose branches I can dimly discern the statue of Henri Quatre. Afar, the sweeping rampart of houses that overhang the river melts in pearly haze, and the dim ranges of roofs uprise like an arena amid which I can see the time-defying towers of Notre Dame and the piercing delicacy of the spire, as it claims the sun in a lance of light.

Here I pause to fill (with reverence) the meerschaum pipe, which is colouring as coyly as a sunkissed peach. "What a privilege to live in this adorable Paris!" I think: "How exasperatingly beautiful!"

Under the statue of Voltaire I stop for a moment to regard that enigmatic smile ; then I turn to the rue Bonaparte. The Ecole des Beaux-Arts is disgorging its students, fantastic little fellows with broad-brimmed hats and dark, downy faces. Here they come, these vivacious *rapins* drawn from all the world by that mighty magnet, Paris. Art is in the very air. In that old quadrangle it quivers from each venerable stone. It challenges at every turn. The shops that line the street exude it. Since I have come here it is odd how I have felt its inspiration, so confident and serene, making me disgusted with everything I have done.

Striking up the Rue de Rennes I come to a doorway bearing the sign in large letters :

MONT DE PIÉTÉ.

Trust the French to do things gracefully. Now, if this was a sordid Anglo-Saxon pawnshop I would be reconnoitering up and down, imagining every one knew my errand. Then I would sneak upstairs like a thief trying to dispose of stolen property. But a Mont de Piété—" here goes ! "

In spite, however, of its benevolent designation I find this French pawnshop in no way disposed to generosity. Even the most hardened London pawnbroker could hardly be more niggard in appraisal of my silver cigarette case than this polite Mont de Piétist who offers me twenty francs on it. Twenty ! it is worth eighty ; but my French is too rudimentary for argument, and as twenty francs is not enough for my purpose I draw forth with a sigh my precious meerschaum and realise another five francs on that.

" What does it matter," I think dolefully. " 'Till the tide turns no more smoking. After all, oh mighty Nicotine, am I thy slave ? Never ! Here do I defy thee ! Oh, little pipe, farewell ! We'll meet again, I trust, in the shade of the mazuma tree."

It is now nearly half-past eleven, and already the Parisian mind is turning joyfully to thoughts of *déjeuner*. Portly men, to whom eating is a religion, are spurring appetite with *apéritif*. Within the restaurants many have already lunched on a sea of Graves and gravy. " Be it ever so humble," I decide, " There's no cooking like ' Home.' "

With which sentiment I pause before a little shop devoted to the sale of ladies' furs, and joyfully regard the object of my journey. It is a large, sleek, glossy muff of the material known as electric rabbit, and its price is twenty-five francs. It just

matches a long wrap of Anastasia's, rather worn out but still nice looking.

"How lucky I ran across it yesterday!" I think, as I hurry joyfully home with the muff under my arm. "And to-morrow's Christmas Day, too. I don't mind giving up tobacco one bit."

So many others are hastening home with parcels under their arms! Such a happy Santa Claus spirit fills the air! Everyone seems so glad-eyed and rosy. I almost feel sorry for the naked cherubs in the centre of the basin in the Luxembourg. Icicles encase them to the toes. Poor little Amours! so pretty in the spring sunshine, now so forlorn.

How quietly I let myself into the apartment! I am afraid she will hear my key scroop in the lock and run as usual to greet me. Softly I slip into the bedroom and pushing the parcel into the suitcase I lock it quickly. Safe!

"Little Thing!" I shout, but there is no reply.

I look into the kitchen, into the dining-room, into the cupboard—no sign of her. Yet often she will hide in order to jump out on me.

"Come out! I know you're there," I cry in several corners. No Little Thing.

Then I must confess I begin to feel just a wee bit anxious; when cautiously I hear another key scroop in the lock. It is Anastasia, and she has evidently been walking briskly, for her eyes are radiant and a roseleaf colour flutters in her cheeks. I watch her steal in just as I have done, holding behind her a largish parcel.

"Hullo! What have you got there?"

She jumps, then tries to conceal the package. Seeing that it is useless she turns on me imperiously.

"Go away one moment! Oh go, please!"

"Tell me what's in your parcel, then."

"It's nossing. It's not your affair. Please, give it to me. Now you are not nice. Oh, thanks! Now you are nice. To-morrow I show you what it is."

So I leave off teasing her and make no further reference to the mysterious packet.

There is no doubt the Christmas spirit is getting into me, for I find it more and more difficult to keep my mind on my work. This is distressing, because lately I have been making but slow progress. Often I find myself halting ten minutes or more to impale some elusive word. Greatly am I concerned over rhythm and structure. Of ideas I have no lack; it is form, form that holds me in travail. And the more I perspire over my periods the more self-exacting I seem to become. There will arrive a time, I fear, when my ideal of expression will be so high I will not be able to express myself at all. I wonder if it is something in the air of this Paris that calls to all that is fine and high in the soul?

After supper Anastasia remarks in some surprise: "Why! you do not smoke zis hevening?"

"No, I'm taking a rest. It's good to leave off sometimes."

She seems about to say something further, but checks herself. Oh, how I do miss that after-dinner pipe! Life suddenly seems hollow and empty. I had always sworn that the best part of a meal was the smoke after; I had always vowed that tobacco added twenty per cent. to my enjoyment of life, and now——

"Little Thing," I say presently, "let's go out on the boulevard. I can't work to-night. It's Christmas Eve."

She responds happily. It is always a joy to her to go out with me.

"You'd better put on your fur. It's awfully cold."

"No, I don't sink so this hevening, if you don't mind. I have not cold, not one bit."

As we emerge from the gloom of the rue Mazarin the river leaps at us in a blaze of glory. Under a sky of rosy cloud it is a triumph of jewelled vivacity.

Exultantly it seems to mirror all the radiance of the city, and the better to display its jewels it undulates in infinite unrest. Here the play of light is like the fluttering of a thousand argent-winged moths, there a weaving of silver foliage, traversed by wriggling emerald snakes. Yonder it is a wimpling of purest platinum ; afar, a billowing of beaten bronze. Bridge beyond bridge is jewel-hung, and coruscates with shifting fires. The little steamers drag their chains of trembling gold, their trains of rippling ruby ; even the black quays seem to be supported on undulant pillars of amber.

Over yonder on the right bank the great Magasins overspill their radiance. They are like huge honeycombs of light, nearly all window, and each window a square of molten gold. The roaring streets flame in fiery dust, and flakes of gold seem to quiver skyward. Oh, how it stirs me, this Paris ! It moves me to delight and despair. To think that I can feel so intensely its wonder and beauty yet be so powerless to express it. I can imagine how too much beauty drives to madness ; how the Chinese poet was drowned trying to clasp the silver reflexion of the moon.

And so we walk along, I fathoms deep in dream, and the little grey figure by my side trying to keep pace with me. She, too, has that appreciation of beauty and art that seems innate in every Parisienne, yet she cannot understand how I can stare at a scene ten, fifteen, twenty minutes. However, she is very patient, and effaces herself most happily.

Never have I seen the Boul' Mich' so gay, and nearly all are carrying parcels. A million mesengers of Santa Claus are hastening to fill with delight the eyes of innocence. The *Petit Jésus* they call him here, these charming Parisian children. Their precious letters to him, placed so carefully in the chimney, are often wept over by mothers in estranging after years. What joy when there comes an

answer to their tiny petitions! When there is none: "Ah! it is because you have not been wise, Clairette. The Little Jesus is not pleased with you." But the Gift-bringer always relents, and the little shoes, brushed by each tot till not a speck of dulness remains, are found in the morning overspilling with glorious things.

All along the outer edge of the pavement stalls have been set up, tenanted by portly, red-faced women, who are padded against the cold till their black-braided jackets fit tight as a drum. There are booths of brilliant confectionery, of marvellous mechanical toys, of perfumery and patent medicines, of appliances for the kitchen and knick-knacks for the boudoir, of music, of magnifying glasses, of hair restorer, of boot polish.

And the street hawkers haranguing the crowd! There are vendors of holly and mistletoe; men carrying umbrellas all stuck over with imitation snails to 'bring the good luck'; others with switches to spank one's mother-in-law; others with grotesque spiders on wire to make the girls scream.

It is nearly midnight when we reach our apartment. The cafés are a glitter of light and a storm of revelry. The supper that is the prelude to further merriment is just beginning, and thousands of happy, careless people are drinking champagne, shouting, singing, laughing. But the rue Mazarin is very dark and quiet, and the girl is very tired.

Then when I am sure that she is asleep I steal to my suitcase and taking out the precious muff lay it at the foot of her bed. Bending over her, as she sleeps like a child, I kiss her. So I too fall asleep.

I am awakened by her scream of delight. She is sitting up, fondling the new muff.

"Oh, I am so please. You don't know how I am please, darleen."

"Oh, it's nothing. Only I thought it would go nicely with your other fur."

Her face changes oddly. Then she rises and brings me the mysterious parcel.

"It's your Christmas. I'm sorry I could not geeve you anysing bettaire. Oh, how I love my muff."

If it had been plucked beaver she could not have been more pleased. I open my parcel eagerly, and a fragrant odour greets me. It is a silver-mounted tobacco jar, full of my favourite amber flake.

Over our *petit déjeuner* of coffee and *croissants* we are both very gay. I decide not to work that day; we will go for a walk.

"Geeve me your pipe, darleen. I feel it for you."

"I don't seem to be able to find it," I answer, searching my pockets elaborately.

"You have not lost it?"

"Oh no, just mislaid it. Never mind, it will turn up all right. Are you ready?"

"Yes, all ready." She holds the precious muff up to her chin, peering at me over it.

"But your wrap! Aren't you going to put that on too?"

Then in fear and trembling she confesses. She has taken her fur to the Mont de Piété that she might have ten francs to buy the tobacco jar.

"Why!" I cry, "I sold my pipe so that I might have enough to buy your muff."

Then I laugh loudly, and after a little she joins me; and there we are both laughing till we are tired: which is not the worst way of beginning Christmas Day, is it?

CHAPTER III

THE CITY OF LIGHT

"LITTLE THING," I say severely, "you must never say 'Damn.'"

"But you say it, darleen."

"Yes, but men may do and say things women must not even think of. Say 'Dash' if you want to say anything."

(Privately I wonder if it really makes much difference.)

"Oh, you are funny. You tell me I must not say 'My God' in English, yet in France everybody say 'Mon Dieu.'"

"Yes, it's not good form to say 'My God' in English; just as you tell me in France in polite society one never refers to a thousand sacred pigs. Profanity is a matter of geography."

But if I succeed in prohibiting the profanity of my country, I cannot prevent her picking up its slang. For instance, "Sure Mike" is often on her lips. She has heard me use it, and it resembles so much her own "*Surement*" that she naturally and innocently adopts it. I tremble now when she speaks English before any punctilious stranger, in case, to some polite inquiry, she answers with an enthusiastic: "Sure Mike."

I have insisted on her recovering her fur from the Mont de Piété, and she in her turn has made me buy a long, black brigandish cape that has previously been worn by some budding Baudelaire or some embryo Verlaine.

"Seems to me," I grumble, "now I have this thing I might as well get one of those bat-winged ties, and a hat with a six-inch brim."

"Oh, you will be lovely like that," she assures me with enthusiasm. "And you must let your hair grow long like hartist. Oh, how *chic* you will be!"

"Perhaps you'd also like me to cultivate an Assyrian beard and curl my hair into ringlets like that man we sat next to at the Café du Dome last night."

"No, no; I do not want that you hide your so nice mouth, darleen. I am prefair American way now."

"You prefer Americans to Frenchmen, then."

"All French girls prefer American and English to Frenchmans. They are so frank, so honest. One can trust them."

"So you would rather be married to an Englishman than a Frenchman?"

"Mon Dieu! yes. The Frenchmans deceive the womans very much, but the Englishman is always *comme il faut*. If ever I have leetle girl I want she shall marry Englishmans. Ah! she shall be like her fazzer, that leetle girl, wiz blue eyes, and colour so fresh; and I want she have the lovely blond hair like all English children."

"What if you have a boy."

"Ah no! I no want boy. I know I am selfeesh. The boys have the best sings in the life, and it is often hard for the womans. But if I have girl I keep her love always. If I have boy soon I lose heem. He get marry, and zen it is feenish. But leetle girl, in trooble she always come back to her muzzaire."

"And suppose you don't have either?"

"Oh, I sink zat would be very, very sad."

Often have I marvelled at the passion for maternity that burns in Anastasia. Her eyes shine so tenderly on children, and she will stop to caress some little one so yearningly.

"By the way, have you ever noticed the child

on the ground floor apartment ?—a little one with hair the colour of honey "

" Oh yes ; she's good friend of me. She is adorable. Oh how I love have childs like zat. She's call Solonge. She's belong Frosine."

" Who's Frosine ? "

" She's girl what sew all day. She work for the Bon Marché. It's awfool how she have to work hard."

" Poor woman ! "

" Oh, no ; she's very 'appy like that. She's free, and she have Solonge. She sing all day when she sew. Oh, she have much of courage, much of merit, that girl."

" But," I say, " would you like to have a child like that if you were not married ? "

" Why not, if I can care well for it and it makes me 'appy ? "

" But—it wouldn't be moral."

" No, but it would be natural."

" Yes, but sometimes isn't it wicked to be natural? "

" I do not understand. I do not sink Frosine is wicked. She's so kind and gently. She adore Solonge. She's brave. All day she work and sing. You do not sink she is bad because she have childs ? "

I did not immediately reply. I am wondering. . . . After all has not every woman a right to a child ? Is it not wrong to deny the finest, truest instincts implanted in humankind ? Why should motherhood under any condition be shameful ? Is it not a glorious thing to bring life into the world ? For the purposes of civilisation can there be too many of us ? Does not life mean effort, progress, human triumph ? As for morality, would not general immorality be a splendid thing if it counteracted race-suicide ?

" Yes, Anastasia," I conclude, " the greatest man that ever lived should take off his hat to the humblest mother, for she has accomplished some-

thing he never could if he lived to be a thousand. But come! Let's go out on the Grand Boulevard I've been working too hard; I'm fagged, I'm stale, there's a fog about my brain."

Very proudly she dons her furs of electric rabbit, and rather ruefully I wreathe myself in my conspiratorial cloak; then together we go down into the city.

The City of Light! Is there another, I wonder, that flaunts so superbly the triumph of man over darkness? From the mount of Parnassus to the Mount of the Martyrs all is a valley of light. The starry sky is mocked by the starry city, its milky way, a river gleaming with gold, shimmering with silver, spangled with green and garnet. The Place de la Concorde is a very lily garden of light; up the jewelled sweep of the Champs Elysées the lights are like sheeny pearls with here and there the exquisite intrusion of a ruby; beneath a tremulous radiance of opals the trees are bathed in milky light, while amid the twinkling groves the night restaurants are sketched in fairy gold. The Grand Boulevards are fiery-walled canyons down which roar tumultuous rivers of light; the Place de l'Opéra is a great eddy, flashing and myriad-gemmed; the *magasins* are blazing furnaces erupting light at every point: they are festooned with flame; they are crammed with golden lustre; they blaze their victorious refulgence in signs of light against the sky. And so night after night this city of sovereign splendour hurls in flashing light its gauntlet of defiance to the Dark.

The pavements are packed with people, moving slowly in opposing streams. Most are garbed in ceremonial best; and many carry flowers, for this is the sacred day of family gathering. The pavement edge is lined with tiny booths and shrill with importunate clamour.

We stop to gaze at some of the mechanical toys.

Here are aeroplanes that whirl around, peacocks that strut and scream, rabbits that hop and squeak, shoeblacks, barbers, acrobats, jugglers, all engaged in their various ways. But what amuses us most is a little servant maid who walks forward in a great hurry carrying a pile of plates, trips, sends them scattering, then herself falls sprawling. How I laugh! Yet I am at the same time laughing at myself for laughing. Am I going back to my second childhood? No! for see; all those bearded Frenchmen are laughing too, just like so many grown-up children.

"Come," I suggest, after we have ranged along a mile or so of these tiny booths, "let's sit down in front of one of the cafés.

With difficulty we find a place, and ordering two *cafés crème* watch the dense procession. The honest bourgeois are going to New Year's Dinner, and their smiles are very happy. Soon they will frankly abandon themselves to the pleasures of the table, discussing each dish with rapture and eating till they can eat no more.

"What a race of gluttons are the French," I remark severely to Anastasia. "Food and dress is about all they seem to think of. The other day I read in the paper that a celebrated *costumier* had received the cross of the Legion of Honour, and this morning I see that a well-known *restaurateur* has also been deemed worthy of the decoration. There you are! Reward your tailors and your cooks while your poets and your painters go buttonless. Oh if there's a people I despise, it's one that makes a god of its stomach! By the way, what have we got for dinner?"

"Oh I got chickens."

"A good fat one, I hope."

"Yes, nice fat chickens. I pay five franc for it. You are not sorry?"

"No that's all right. We can make it do two

evenings, and we allow ourselves five francs a day for grub. I fancy we don't spend even that, on an average ? "

" No, about four and half franc."

Every week she brought her expense book to me, and very solemnly I wrote beneath it : " Examined and found correct." Another habit was to present for my approval a menu of all our meals for the coming week beneath which I would, in the same serious spirit, write : " Approved." To these impressive occasions she contributed a proper dignity ; yet at a hint of praise for her house-keeping nothing could exceed her delight.

Presently we rise and continue our walk. Everywhere is the same holiday spirit, the same easily amused crowd. There are song writers hawking their ditties, poor artists peddling their paintings, a " canvas for a crust." Even needy art is gleaning on the streets.

" Stop ! " she cries suddenly, drawing me in the direction of a small crowd. " Let's watch the silhouette man."

He is young, glib, good-looking. He has audacious eyes and a rapscallion smile. This smile is sometimes positively impish in its mockery ; yet otherwise he is rather like a cherub. His complexion is pinkish, his manner mercurial, his figure shapely and slim. He is dressed in the cloak, broad-brimmed hat, and voluminous velveteen trowsers of the *rapin*. I stare at him. Something vaguely familiar in him startles me.

In one hand he holds a double sheet of black paper, in the other a pair of scissors. For a moment he looks keenly at his subject, then getting the best angle for the profile, proceeds without any more ado to cut the silhouette. It is a very deft, delicate performance and all over in a minute.

" Just watch him, Anastasia," I say after a pause. " I think there's something interesting

going to happen." Then in a drawling voice I remark:

"Well, if that's not a dead ringer for Livewire Lorrimer!"

He hears me, looks up like a flash, scrutinises me in a puzzled way.

"I haven't heard that name for fifteen years. Of all the—why, if it isn't Jimmy Madden, Mad Madden, Blackbeard the pirate, Red Hand the scout, friend of my boyhood! I say! there's a dozen people waiting and this is my busy day. Ask your friend to stand up to the light and I'll make a silhouette of her while we talk."

"My wife."

"Bless us! Married too! Well, congratulations. Charmed to meet Madame. There! Just stand so."

With great dexterity he proceeds to cut Anastasia's delicate features on the black paper.

"Great Scott! I haven't heard a word about you since I left home. But then I've lost track of all the crowd. Well, what in the world are you doing here?"

"I'm trying to break into the writing game. And you?"

"For ten years I've been trying to become an artist. Occasionally I get enough to eat. I have to work for a living, as you see at present; but when I get a little ahead I go back to my art. Where do you live?"

I tell him.

"Oh, I know, garden and statuary in the court. I lived in that street myself for a time, but my landlord and I did not agree. He had ridiculous ideas on the subject of rent. My idea of rent is money you owe. He was so prejudiced that one night I lowered all my effects to a waiting friend with a *voiture à bras*, and since then rue Mazarin has seen little of me. But I'd like to come and see you. We'll talk over old days."

" Yes, I do wish you would come."

" I will. Ah, Madame, here is your charming profile. I only regret that my clumsy scissors fail to do you justice. Yes, Madden, I'll come. And now, if you'll excuse me, there's a dozen people waiting. I must make my harvest while the sun shines. Good-bye, just now. Expect me soon."

He waves us an airy farewell, and a moment after, with the same intent gaze, he is following the features of a fat Frenchwoman, who laughs immoderately at his pleasantries.

We walk home almost without speaking. Anastasia has got into the way of respecting my thoughts. To her I am Balsac, Hugo and Zola rolled into one, and labelled James Horace Madden. Who is she that should break in on the dreams of this great author ? Rather let her foster them by sympathetic silence. Yet on this occasion she looks up in my face and sighs wistfully :

" What are you sinking of, darleen ? "

Now, here's what I think she thinks I am thinking :

" Oh this fiery, fervid Paris, how can my pen proclaim its sovereignty over cities, its call to high endeavour, its immemorial grace ? How can I paint its folly and its faith, its laughter and its tears, its streets where tragedy and farce walk arm in arm, where parody hobnobs with pride, and beauty bends to ridicule ! Oh exquisite Paris ! so old and yet so eternally young, so peerless, yet ever prinking and preening to make more exorbitant demands on our admiration. . . ." And so on.

Here's what I am really thinking :

" Funny I should run into Livewire like that. To think of it ! We swapped the same dime novels, robbed the same cherry trees. Together we competed for the bottom place in the class. (I think I generally won.) By pedagogic standards we were certainly impossible. And yet at some studies how precocious ! How I remember that novel I

wrote, *The Corsair's Crime, or The Hound of the Hellespont*, illustrated by Livewire on every page Oh, I'd give a hundred dollars to have that manuscript to-day!" and so on.

Here's what I say I am thinking:

"I was wondering, Anastasia, if when you bought that chicken, you let them clean it in the shop. Because if you do they just take it away and bring you back an inferior one. You can't trust them. You should clean it yourself. Be sure you roast it gently, so as to have it nicely browned all over. . . ." And so on.

It is night now and I am working on my articles while she sews steadily. It has been a long silent evening, a fire of *boulets* throws out a gentle heat, and she sits on one side, I on the other. About ten o'clock she complains of feeling tired, and decides to go to bed. After our habit I lie down on my own bed, to wait with her till she goes to sleep; for she is just like a child in some ways. I am reading, and the better to see, I lie with my head where my feet should be.

As she is dropping off to sleep, suddenly she says:

"Will you let me hold your foot, darleen?"

"Yes, it's there. But if you want to look for holes in the sock, you won't find any."

"No, it's not zat. I just want to pretend it's leetle *bébé*."

So she holds it close to her breast, and ever since then she will not sleep unless she is holding what she calls "her *poupée*."

CHAPTER IV

THE CITY OF LAUGHTER

The last few weeks have passed so swiftly I scarce can credit it. In the mornings my vitalizing walks; in the afternoons my lapidary work in prose. I have begun a series of articles on Paris, and have just finished the first two, bestowing on them a world of loving care. Never have I known such a steady glow of inspiration. A pure delight in form and colour thrills in me. I begin to see beauty in the commonest things, to find a joy in the simplest moments of living.

It is rather curious, this. For instance, I gaze in rapture at a shop where vegetables are for sale, charmed with its oasis of fresh colouring in the grey street, the globular gold of turnips, the rich ruby of radishes, the ivory white of parsnips. Then a fish shop charms me, and I turn from the burning orange of the dories to the olive and pearl of the merlin; from the jewelled mail of the mackerel to the silver cuirass of the herring. And every day seems fresh to me. I hail it with a new-born joy. I seem to have regained all the wonder and vital interest of the child point of view. In my work, especially, do I find such a delight that I shall be sorry to die, chiefly because it will end all my labour. "So much to do," I sigh, "and only one little lifetime to do it in."

Then there are long, serene evenings by the fire, where I ponder over my prose, while Anastasia sits absorbed in her work. What a passion she has for her needle! She plies it as an artist, delighting in difficulties, in intricate lacework, in elaborate embroidery. In little squares of fine net she works

scenes from Fontaine ; or else over a great frame on which a sheet of satin is tightly stretched, she makes wonderful designs in silks of delicate colouring. At such times she will forget everything else, and sit for hours tranquilly happy. So I write and dream ; while she plies that exquisite needle, and perhaps dreams too.

" Oh, how good it is to be poor ! " I said last night. " What a new interest life takes on when one has to fight for one's bread ! How much better to have nothing and want everything, than to have everything and want nothing ! Just think, Little Thing, how pleased we are at the end of the week if we've spent five francs less than we thought ! Here's a month gone now and I've done four articles and a story, and we still have three hundred francs left."

" When will it be that you will send them to the journals ? "

" Oh, no hurry. I want to stack up a dozen, and then I'll start shooting them in."

" We have saved four francs and half last week."

" The deuce we have ! Then let's go to the Bullier to-night. We both want a touch of gay life. Come ! we'll watch Paris laugh."

So we climbed the Boul' Mich', till at its head in a crescent of light we saw the name of the famous old dance-hall. Threading our way amid the little green tables, past the bowling alley and the bar, we found a place in the side gallery.

We were looking down on a scene of the maddest gaiety. The great floor was dense with dancers and kaleidoscopic in colouring. In the wildest of spirits five hundred men and girls were capering, shuffling, jigging and contorting their bodies in time to tumultuous music. Some danced limb to limb, others were bent out like a bow ; some sidled like a crab, others wriggled like an eel ; some walked, some leaped, some slid, some merely kicked sideways : it was dancing in delirium, Bedlam in the ball-room.

And what conflicting colours! Here a girl in lobster pink galloped with another whose costume was like mayonnaise. There a negress in brilliant scarlet with a corsage of silver darted through the crowd like a flame. A hideous negro was dancing with a pretty grisette, who with fluffy hair and flushed cheeks looked at him adoringly as he pawed her with his rubber-blue palms. An American girl in shirt waist and bicycle skirt zig-zagged in and out with a dashing Spaniard. A tall, bashful Englishman pranced awkwardly around with a *midinette* in citron and cerise, while a gentleman from China solemnly gyrated with a *mannequin* in pistachio and chocolate. Pretty girls nearly all; and where they lacked in looks, full of that sparkling Parisian charm.

"There's your friend, Monsieur Livwir," said Anastasia suddenly. Sure enough, there in that maelstrom of merriment I saw Lorrimer dancing with a girl of dazzling prettiness. Presently I caught his eye, and after the dance he joined us.

"You haven't been to see me yet," I remarked.

"No, been too busy,—working every moment of my time." Then realising that the present moment rather belied him, he shrugged his shoulders.

To tell the truth I have been feeling a little hurt. We sentimentalists are so prone to measure others by our own standards. Our meeting, so interesting to me, had probably never given him another thought. Now I saw that while I was an egoist, Lorrimer was an egotist; but with one of his boyish smiles he banished my resentment.

"Let me introduce you to Rougette," he said airily. "She's my model."

He beckoned to the tall blonde. Rarely have I seen a girl of more distracting prettiness. Her hair was of ashen gold; parma violets might have borrowed their colour from her eyes; Nice roses might have copied their tint from her cheeks, and her tall figure

was of a willowy grace. Her manner had all the winning charm of frank simplicity. She was indeed over pretty, one of those girls who draw eyes like a magnet, so that the poor devil who adores them has little peace.

"The belle of all Brittany," said Lorrimer proudly. "I discovered her when I was sketching at Pont Aven last summer. I'm going to win the Prix de Rome with a picture of that girl. I'm the envy of the Quarter. Several Academicians have tried to get her away from me; but she's loyal—as good as she looks."

I did not find it easy to talk to Rougette. Her French was the *argot* of the Quarter, grafted on to the *patois* of the Breton peasant; mine, of the school primer. Our conversation consisted chiefly of smiles, and circumspect ones at that, as Anastasia had her eye on me.

"After another dance," suggested Lorrimer, "let's go over to the Lilas. We'll probably see Helstern there. I'd like you to meet him. Besides, it's the night the Parnassian crowd get together. Perhaps you'll be amused."

"Delighted."

"All right."

Off they went with their arms around each other's necks, and I watched them swiftly mingle with the dancers. What a pretty couple they made!—Lorrimer so dashing and debonair, with his face of a sophisticated cherub, and his auburn hair that looked as if it might have been enamelled on his head, so smooth was it; Rougette with the mien of a goddess and the simple soul of a Breton fishwife.

But it was hard to follow them now, for the throng on the floor had doubled. In ranks that reached to the side galleries the spectators hemmed them in. The variety of costume grew more and more bewildering. Men were dressed as women, women as men. Four monks entered arm in arm with four devils;

Death danced with Spring, an Incroyable with a stone-age man, an apache with a Salomé. More and more *négligé* grew the costumes as models, mannequins, milliners threw aside encumbering garments. Everyone was getting wound up. Yells and shrieks punctuated the hilarity ; then the great orchestra burst into a popular melody and everyone took up the chorus :

Down in Mozambique, Mozambique, Mozambique,
It's so *chic*, oh so *chic* ;
No need to bother over furs and frills,
No need to worry over tailor's bills ;
Down in Mozambique, Mozambique, Mozambique,
You may wear fig-leaves there
When you go a-mashing in the open air
In Mo-zam-bique.

As they finished men tossed their partners in the air and carried them off the floor. Everyone was hot and dishevelled ; the air reeked of pachouli and perspiration, and seeing Lorrimer signalling to us we made our escape.

I remember how deliciously pure seemed the outside air. The long tree-clad Avenue de l'Observatoire was blanched with hoar frost and gleamed whitely. The face of the sky was pitted with stars, and the crescent moon seemed to scratch it like the manicured nail-tip of a *demi-mondaine*. Across the street amid the trees beaconed the lights of a large corner café, and to this we made our way.

A long room, lined with tables, dim with tobacco smoke, clamorous with conversation. We found a vacant table, and Lorrimer, after consulting us, ordered "ham sandveeches et grog American." In the meantime I was busy gazing at the human oddities around me. It seemed as if all the freaks of the Quarter had gathered here. Nearly all wore their hair of eccentric length. Some had it thrown back from the brow and falling over the collar in a cascade. Others parted it in the middle

and let it stream down on either side, hiding their ears. Some had it cut square to the neck, and coming round in two flaps; with others again it was fuzzy and stood up like a nimbus. Many of the women, on the other hand, had it cut squarely in the Egyptian manner; so that it was difficult to tell them at a distance from their male companions.

"It's really a fact," said Lorrimer, "that long hair is an aid to inspiration. Every time I cut mine it's good-bye work till it grows again. And as I really hate it long my work suffers horribly."

The centre of attraction seemed to be a tall man whose sallow face was framed in inky hair that detached itself in snaky locks. As if to accentuate the ravenish effect he wore an immense black silk stock, and his pince-nez dangled by a black riband. This was the Paul Ford, the Prince of the Poets, the heritor of the mantle of Verlaine.

"There's a futurist poet," said Lorrimer, pointing to a man in a corner who had evidently let his comb fall behind the bureau and been too lazy to go after it. He had a peaked face overwhelmed by stringy hair, with which his beard and whiskers made such an intimate connection that all you could see was a wedge of nose and two pale-blue eyes gleaming through the tangle.

"See that man to the right," went on my informer; "that's a cubist sculptor, a Russian Jew."

The sculptor looked indeed like a mujic, with coarse, spiky hair growing down over his forehead, eyebrows that made one arch over his fierce little eyes, upturned nose, a beard and moustache, which, divided by his mouth, looked exactly like a scrubbing-brush the centre of which has been rubbed away by long usage.

"Look! There's an Imagist releasing some of his inspirations."

This was a meagre little man in evening dress, with a bony skull concealed by the usual mop of hair.

He had a curiously elongated face, something like a horse, the eyes of a seraph, the shell-like colour of a consumptive, large, vividly-red lips, and an ineffable smile which exposed a small cemetery of decayed teeth.

"Ah!" said Lorrimer suddenly, "see that chap sitting lonely in the corner with his arms folded and a sort of Strindberg-Nietzsche-Ibsen expression? Well, that's Helstern."

I saw a tall, youngish-oldish sort of man with a face of distinguished taciturnity. His mouth was grimly clinched; two vertical lines were written between his eyebrows, and a very high forehead was further heightened by upstanding iron-grey hair. On the other hand, his brown eyes were soft, velvety and shy. He was dressed in dead black, with a contrast of very white linen. Close to his elbow stood a great stein of beer, while he puffed slowly from a big wooden pipe carved into a fantastic Turk's head.

"Poor old Helstern!" said Lorrimer, "he takes life so seriously. Take life seriously and you're going to get it in the neck; laugh at it, and it can never hurt you"

This was his gay philosophy, as indeed it was of the careless and merry Quarter he seemed to epitomise. Treat everything in a cynical and mocking spirit, and you yourself are beyond the reach of irony. It is so much easier to destroy than to build up. Yet there was something tart and stimulating in his scorn of things as they are.

"Too bad to drag him from sublime heights of abstraction down to our common level. Doesn't he look like a seer trying to discern through the anarchy of the present some hope for the future? Well, I'll go over and see if he'll join us. He's shy with women."

So the Cynic descended on the Seer, and the Seer listened, drank, smoked thoughtfully, looked covertly at the two girls, then rose and approached us. With

a shock of pity I saw that one of his legs was shorter than the other, and terminated in a club foot. Otherwise he was splendidly developed, and had one of the deepest bass voices I have ever heard.

"Well, old man, alone as usual."

Somewhat self-conscious and embarrassed, Helstern spoke rather stiffly.

"My dear Lorrimer, much as I appreciate your charming society there are moments when I prefer to be alone."

"Oh, I understand. Great thoughts incubated in silence. Own up now, weren't you thinking in nations?"

"As it happens," answered the Seer in his grave, penetrating tones, "I was thinking in nations. As a matter of fact I was listening to the conversation of two Englishmen near me."

He paused to light his pipe carefully, then went on in that deep, deliberate voice.

"They were talking of International Peace—fools!"

"Oh, come now! You believe in International Peace?"

He stared gloomily into the bowl of his pipe.

"Bah! a chimera! futile babble! No, no; there are too many old scores to settle, too many wrongs to right, too many blood feuds to be fought to a finish. But there will be International War such as the world has never seen. And why not? We are becoming a race of egotists, civilisation's mollycoddles; we set far too high a value on our lives. Oh, I will hate to see the day when grand old war will cease, when we will have the hearts of women, and the splendid spirit of revenge will have passed away!"

"Don't listen to him," said Lorrimer. "He isn't so bloodthirsty as he sounds. He wouldn't harm a fly. He's actually a vegetarian. What work are you doing now, you old fraud?"

Helstern looked round in that shy self-conscious way of his :

" I'm working on an allegorical group for the Salon."

" What's the subject ? "

" Well, if I must confess it, it's International Peace. Of course, it's absurd ; but the only consolation for living in this execrable world is that one can dream of a better one. To dream of beauty and to create according to his dream, that is the divine privilege of the artist."

" Yes, what dreamers are we artists ! " said Lorrimer thoughtfully. " You, Helstern, dream of leaving the world a little better than you find it ; I dream of Fame, of doing work that will win me applause ; and you, Madden—what do you dream of ? "

" Oh, I don't take myself quite so grandiosely," I said with a laugh. " I dream of making enough money to take me back to the States, to show them I'm not a failure."

" Failure ! " said Lorrimer with some feeling. " It's those who stay at home that are the failures. Look at them—small country ministers, provincial lawyers, flourishing shopkeepers ; such are the shining lights of our schoolboy days. Tax-payers, pillars of respectability, good honest souls, but—failures all."

" A few are drummers," I said. " The rest are humdrummers."

" Yes," said Lorrimer. " By way of example, let me relate the true history of James and John."

" James was the model boy. He studied his lessons, was conscientious and persevering. He held the top of the class so often that he came to consider he had an option on it. He nearly wore his books out with study, and on prize-giving days he was the star actor on the programme. Brilliant future prophesied for James.

" Twin brother John, on the other hand, as consistently held down the bottom of the class. He was lazy, unambitious, irreverent. He preferred play to study, and was the idol of the unregenerate. Direst failure prophesied for John.

" James went into the hardware store and commenced to save his earnings. Soon he was promoted to be salesman. He began to teach in the Sunday School. He was eager to work overtime, and spent his evenings studying the problems of the business.

" John began to take the downward path right away. He attended racecourses, boldly entered saloons, haunted low music-halls. The prophets looked wiser than ever. He lost his job and took to singing at smoking concerts. He spent his time trying to give comic imitations of his decent neighbours, and practising buck and wing dances till his legs seemed double-jointed.

" James at this period wore glossy clothes, and refused to recognise John on the street. John merely grinned.

" James stayed with the home town, married respectably, and had six children in rapid succession as every respectable married man should. He owned the house he lived in, and at last became head of the hardware store.

" John one day disappeared ; said the village was too small for him ; wanted to get to a city where he could have scope for his talents. Said the prophets : ' I told you so.'

" And to-day, James, my friends, is a school trustee, an alderman, a deacon of the church. He is pointed out to the rising generation as a model of industry and success. But John—where is John ?

" Alas ! John is, I regret to say, at present touring in the Frobert & Shumann Vaudeville Circuit. He is a head-liner, and makes five hundred dollars a week. All he does for it is to sing some half-a-dozen songs every night, in which he takes off his native towns

men, and to dance some eccentric steps of his own invention. He has a limousine, a house on Riverside Drive, and a box of securities in the Safety Deposit Vault that makes the clerk stagger every time he takes it out. He talks of buying up his native village some day, and the prophets have gone out of business.

"And now, friends, let's pry out the unmoral moral. Honest merit may clinch the boss job in the hardware store, but idle ignorance often cops the electric sign on Broadway. The lazy man spends his time scheming how to get the easy money —and often gets it. The ignorant man unwarped by tradition, develops on original lines that make for fortune. Even laziness and ignorance can be factors of success. All of which isn't according to the Sunday School story book, but it's the world we live in. And now as I see Madam is tired, let's bring the session to a close."

That night, as I was going home, with Anastasia clinging on my arm, I said :

"And what is it you dream of, Little Thing ? "

"Me ! Oh, I dream all time I make good wife for the Beautiful One I have."

CHAPTER V

THE CITY OF LOVE

THIS morning in the course of my walk I was passing Cook's corner in the Place de l'Opéra, when I was accosted from behind by an alcoholic voice :

" Want to see the Crystal Palace to-day, sir ? "

Now the Crystal Palace is one of those traps for the unwary stranger with which Paris is baited. You are ushered into a brilliantly lit room, whose walls and ceiling are made of mirrors. Presently the door opens, and in troop five or six girls, clad only in tambourines, who straightway proceed to dance a tarantella. At its conclusion you are asked to buy them champagne, and you are indeed lucky if you get out of the place under a hundred francs. Half of this goes as commission to the guide, a gang of whom infest this particular corner.

I was going on, then, when something familiar in the voice made me turn sharply. Lo and behold !— O'Flather.

" Hullo, Professor ! " I said, with a grin. " Gone out of the flea-taming business ? "

For a moment he stared at me.

" Hullo ! young man. Yep. Met with a dirty deal. One of my helpers doped the troupe. Them as wasn't stiff and cold was no more good for work. Busted me up."

" Too bad. What are you doing now ? "

" Working as a guide."

" But you don't know Paris ! "

" 'Tain't necessary. Mighty few Paris guides know Paris. Don't have to."

" Well, I wish you luck," I said, and left him. He looked after me curiously. His eyes were bloodshot

from excessive drinking, and his dewlaps were blotched and sagging. "Vindictive brute!" I thought. "If he only knew, wouldn't he be mad! What a ripping villain he'd make if this was only fiction instead of real life!"

It was this morning, too, I made the acquaintance of Frosine. Passing through the mildewed court I saw peering through the window of a basement room the wistful face of little Solonge. Against the dark interior her head of silky gold was like that of a cherub painted on a panel. Struck with a sudden idea, I knocked at their door.

Solonge opened it, turning the handle, after several attempts, with both hands, and very proud of the feat. She welcomed me shyly, and a clear voice invited me to enter. If the appearance of the child had formerly surprised me, I was still more astonished when I saw the mother. She was almost as dark as the little one was fair. The contrast was so extreme that one almost doubted their relationship.

Scarcely did she pause in her work as I entered. She seemed, indeed, a human sewing machine. With lightning quickness she fed the material to the point of her needle, and every time she drew it through a score of stitches would be made. Already the bed was heaped with work she had finished, and a small table was also piled with stuff. A wardrobe, a stove, and two chairs completed the furniture of the room.

But if I felt inclined to pity Frosine the feeling vanished on looking into her face. It was so brave, so frank, so cheerful. There was no beauty, but a piquant quality that almost made up for its lack. Character, variety, appeal she had, and a peculiar fascinating quality of redemption. Thus the beautiful teeth redeemed the rather large mouth; the wide set hazel eyes redeemed the short, irregular nose; the broad well-shaped brow redeemed the somewhat soft chin. Her skin was of a fine delicacy, one of

those skins that seem to be too tightly stretched; and constant smiling had made fine wrinkles round her mouth and eyes.

"A female with an active sense of humour," I thought. Anastasia's sense of humour was passive, Rougette's somewhat atrophied. So Mademoiselle Frosine smiled, and her smile was irresistible. It brought into play all these fine wrinkles; it was so whole-hearted, so free from reservations. That tonic smile would have made a pessimist burn his Schopenhauer, and take to reading Elbert Hubbard.

"Mademoiselle," I began in my fumbling French, "I have come to beg a favour of you. You would be a thousand times amiable if you could spare Solonge for an hour or two in the afternoon, to go with us to the Luxembourg Gardens. There she may play in the sunshine, and it will give my wife infinite gladness to watch her."

Frosine almost dropped her needle with pleasure. "Oh, you are so good. It will be such a joy for my little one, and will make me so happy. Madame loves children, does she not?"

"It is truly foolish how she loves them. She will be ravished if you will permit us to have your treasure for a little while."

"Ah, monsieur, you are entirely too amiable."

"Not at all. It is well heard, then?"

"But yes, certainly. You make me too happy."

"Ah, well! This afternoon at three o'clock?"

"At three o'clock."

So I broke the news to Anastasia. "Little Thing, I've borrowed a baby for you this afternoon. Solonge is coming with us to the gardens."

(Really, if I had given her a new hat she could not have been more enchanted.)

"Oh, that will be lovely! Then will I have my two childrens with me. You don't know how I am glad."

So we gaily descended the timeworn stairs, and found the youngster eagerly awaiting us. In her

navy blue coat and hat her wealth of long hair looked fairer and silkier than ever. For a child of four and a half she was very tall and graceful. Then we bade the mother *au revoir*, and with the youngster chattering excitedly, as she held the hand of Anastasia, and me puffing at the cheap briar I had bought in the place of the ill-fated meerschaum, we started out.

"I suppose if it hadn't been for Solonge," I observed, "Frosine would have thrown up the sponge long ago. How awful to be alone day after day, sewing against time, so to speak; and that for all one's life!"

"Oh, no. There is many a girl like that in Paris. They work till they die. They are brought up in the *convent*. That make them very serious."

Anastasia had certainly the deepest faith in her religion.

After its long winter *relâche* the glorious old garden was awakening to the symphony of Spring. The soft breeze that stirred the opening buds came to us laden with fragrance, arousing that so exquisite feeling of sweet confused memory that only the Spring-birth can evoke. The basin of the Fontaine de Médicis was stained a delicate green by peeping leaves, and a flock of fat sparrows with fluttering feathers and joyous cries were making much ado. We sat down on one of the stone benches because the pennies for the chairs might buy many needful things.

That dear, dear garden of the Luxembourg, what, I wonder, is the secret of its charm? Is it that it is haunted by the sentiment and romance of ages dead and forgotten? Beautiful it is, yet other gardens are also beautiful, and—oh, how different! Surely it should be sacred—sacred to children, artists and lovers. There, under the green and laughng leaf, where statues glimmer in marble or gloom in bronze and the fountain throws to the tender sky its exquisite aigrette of gold—there the children play, the artists

dream, and the lovers exchange sweet kisses. Oh, Mimi and Musette, where the bust of Murger lies buried in the verdure, listening to the protestations of your Eugene and Marcel! do you not dream that in this self-same spot your mothers in their hours listened to the voice of love, nay, even *their* mothers in their hours. So over succeeding generations will the old garden cast its spell, and under the branches of the old trees lovers in days to come will whisper their vows. Yea, I think it is daunted, that dear, dear garden of the Luxembourg.

Solonge, whom I had decided to call "The Môme," had a top which she kept going with a little whip. To start it she would wind the lash of the whip around its point, then standing it upright in the soft ground, give it a sharp jerk. But after a little she grew tired of this, and began to ask questions about fairies. Never have I seen a child so imaginative. Her world is peopled with fairies, with whom she holds constant communion. There are tree fairies, water fairies, fairies that live in the ground, fairies that lurk in the flowers—she can tell you all about them. Her faith in them is touching, and brutal would he be who tried to shatter it.

"You that make so many stories," said Anastasia, as she listened to the prattle of the Môme, "have you no stories for children? Can you not make one for little Solonge?"

"Yes, of course, I might; but you will have to put it in French for her."

"All right. I try."

So I thought a little, then I began:

Once upon a time there was a little boy who was very much alone and who dreamed greatly. In his father's garden he had a tiny corner of his own, and in this corner grew a large pumpkin. The boy, who had never seen a pumpkin so big, thought that it might take a prize at the yearly show in the village, and so every day he fed it with milk, and always with the milk of the brindled cow, which was richest of all.

So the pumpkin grew and grew, and the little boy became so wrapt up in it he thought of little else. At last it grew to such a size that other people began to look at it, and say it would surely take a prize. The little boy became more proud of it than ever, and fed it more and more of the milk of the brindled cow, and took to rubbing it till it shone with his big brother's silk handkerchief.

Then one night as he lay in bed he heard a great to-do in the garden, and ran out in his night-dress. There was a patch of ground where grew the pumpkins, and another where grew the squashes, and both seemed greatly disturbed. Fearing for his favourite he hurried forward. No, there it was, great and glossy in the moonlight. He kissed it, and even as he did so it seemed as if he heard from within it a tiny, tinny voice calling his name. In surprise he stepped back, and the next moment a door opened in the side of the pumpkin and a fairy stepped forth.

"I am the Pumpkin King," said the fairy, "and in the name of the Pumpkin People I bid you welcome."

Then the boy saw that the inside of the great gourd was hollow, and was lit with a wondrous chandelier of glow-worms. It was furnished like a little chamber, with a bed, table, chairs—such a room as you may see in a house for dolls. The boy wished greatly that he might enter, and even as he wished he found that he had grown very small, as small, indeed, as his own finger.

"Will you not enter?" asked the King with a smile of welcome.

So the boy and the King became great friends, and each night when everyone else was a-bed he would steal forth and sit in the chamber of the Pumpkin King. The King thanked him for his care of the royal residence, and told him many things of the vegetable world. But chiefly he talked of the endless feud between the pumpkins and their hereditary enemies, the squashes. Whenever the two came together there was warfare, and when the squashes were more numerous the pumpkins were often defeated. Yonder by the gate dwelt the Squash King, a terrible fellow, of whom the Pumpkin King lived in fear.

"Can I not kill him for you?" said the little boy.

"No, no,' answered the King. "No mortal can destroy a fairy. Things must take their course."

At this the little boy was very sad, and began to dread all kinds of dangers for his friend the King. Then one day he was taken ill with a cold, and the window was closed at night so that he could not steal out as usual. And as he lay tossing in his bed he heard a great noise in the garden. At once he knew that a terrible battle was raging between

the squash and the pumpkin tribes. Alas! he could do nothing to help his friends, so he cried bitterly.

And next morning his father came to his bedside and told him that all the pumpkins had been destroyed, including his big one.

"It was that breechy brindled cow," said the father. "It must have broken into the garden in the night."

But the little boy knew better.

As I finished, a deep, strongly vibrating voice greeted us.

"What a pretty domestic scene. Didn't know you had a youngster, Madden. Must congratulate you."

Looking up I saw Helstern. He was leaning on a stout stick, carved like a gargoyle. All in black, with that mane of iron-grey hair and his keen, stern face, he made quite a striking figure. There is something unconsciously dramatic about Helstern; I, on the other hand, am consciously dramatic; while Lorrimer is absolutely natural.

"Sorry," I said, "she doesn't belong to us. We've just borrowed her for the afternoon."

"I see. What a beautiful type! English, I should imagine?"

"No, that's what makes her so different—French."

He looked at her as if fascinated.

"I'd like awfully to make a sketch of her, if you can get her to stand still."

At that moment there was no difficulty, for the Môme was gazing in round-eyed awe at the ferocious Turk's head pipe in the sculptor's mouth. So Helstern took a chair, whipped out his sketch-book, and before the fascinated child could recover he had completed a graceful little sketch.

"Splendid!" I said.

Anastasia, too, was enthusiastic; but when the Môme, who was now nestling in her arms, saw it she uttered a scream of delight.

"If you just sit still a little," said Helstern eagerly, "while I do another one for myself, I'll give you this one to take home to your mother."

The Môme was very timid; but we posed her sitting on the end of the stone seat, with one slim leg bent under her and the other dangling down, while she scattered some crumbs for the fat sparrows at her feet. Against the background of a lilac bush she made a charming picture, and Helstern worked with an enthusiasm that made his eyes gleam, and his stern face relax. This time he used a fine pencil of sepia tint, working with the broad of it so as to get soft effects of shadow. True, he idealised almost beyond resemblance; but what a delicate, graceful picture he made!

"It isn't such a good likeness as the first one," I remarked, after I had murmured my admiration.

"Ah!" he said, with the pitying superiority of the artist. "But you don't see her as I see her."

There, I thought, is Art in a nutshell; the individual vision, the divination of the soul of things, hidden inexorably from the common eye. To see differently, a greener colour in the grass, a deeper blue in the sky, a Madonna in a woman of the street, an angel in a child, God in all things—oh, enchanted Vision! they who have thee should be happier than kings.

"There, little one!" said the sculptor, giving her the first sketch. "Take that to your mother and say I said she should be very proud of you. Heavens, I wish I could do a clay figure of her. I wish——"

He looked at her in a sort of ecstasy, sighed deeply, then stumped away looking very thoughtful.

"Is he not distinguished," I said, "in spite of that foot of his?"

"Ah! that is so sad, I sink. But perhaps it is for the best he have foot like that. It make him more serious; it make him great artist."

Trust Anastasia to find some compensation in all misfortune!

Frosine was plying that lightning needle when we returned. She looked up joyfully as the little one rushed to her with the sketch.

"Who did this? It is my little pigeon—truly, it is her very self."

"It was a friend of ours," said Anastasia, "who is a great sculptor, or, at least, who is going to be. He has fallen in love with your daughter, as indeed we all have."

"Oh, it is so good of you to take her out. Already I see a difference in her. I would not have her grow up like the children of the streets, and it is so hard when one is poor and has to work every moment of one's time. As for this picture, thank the Monsieur. Say I will treasure it."

We promised to do so, and left her singing gaily by the open window as she resumed her everlasting toil.

So it has come about that nearly every afternoon we sit in the Luxembourg enjoying the mellow sunshine, with the little girl playing around us. We know many people by sight, for the same ones come day after day. There by the terrace of the Queen's we watch the toy yachts careening in the basin, the boys playing diabolo, the sauntering students with their sweethearts. Anastasia works industriously on some Spanish embroidery, I read for the twentieth time one of my manuscripts, while the Môme leaps and laughs as she keeps a shuttlecock boundng in the air. Her eyes are very bright now, and her delicate cheeks have a rosy stain. Then, when over the great trees the western sky is aglow, when the fountain turns to flame, and a charmed light lingers in the groves, slowly we go home. Days of grateful memory, for in them do I come to divine the deepest soul of Paris, that which is Youth and Love.

CHAPTER VI

GETTING DOWN TO CASES

"ANASTASIA," I said with a sigh, "did I ever tell you of Gwendolin?"

"No; what is it?" she asked, and her face had rather an anxious expression.

"Gwendolin was a girl, a very nice girl, a trained nurse; and we were engaged."

"What you mean? She was your *fiancée*?"

"Yes, she was one of my *fiancées*."

"What! You have more than one?" The poor girl was really horrified.

"Oh, several. I don't just remember how many. I quarrelled with one because we couldn't agree over the name we would give the first baby. I broke it off with another because her stomach made such funny noises every time I tried to squeeze her. It made me nervous. But Gwendolin—I must tell you about her. I was very ill with diphtheria in a lonely house by the sea, and she had come to nurse me. She would let no one else come near me, and she waited on me night and day."

(Anastasia suspended operations on the heel of my sock she was darning.)

"She was a nervous, high-strung girl, and she watched over me with an agony of care. There was a doctor, too, who came twice a day, yet, in spite of all, I hourly grew more weak. My dreary moans seemed to be echoed by the hollow moans of the sea."

(Anastasia seemed divided between resentment of Gwendolin and pity for me.)

"Well, the poor girl was almost worn to a shadow, and one night, as she sat by me, pale

and hollow-eyed, I saw a sudden change come over her.

"'I can stand it no longer,' she cried. 'His every moan pierces me to the heart. I must do something, something.'

"Then she rose and I was conscious of her great, pitiful eyes. Suddenly I thrilled with horror, for I realised that they were the eyes of a mad woman. The strain of nursing had unhinged her mind.

"'The doctor tells me there is no hope,' she went on. 'Oh, I cannot bear to hear him suffer so. I must give him peace;—but how?'

"On a table near by there was a small pair of scissors. She took them up thoughtfully.

"'Dearest,' she said to me, 'your sufferings will soon be over. I am going to cut your poor throat that gives you such pain.'

"I struggled, twisting my head this way and that, but she held me like a vice, and over my throat I felt two edges of cold steel."

(Anastasia was gazing in horror.)

"Steadily they closed, tighter, tighter. Now I could feel them bite the flesh and the blood spout. Then I, who for days had been unable to utter a word, suddenly found my voice.

"'Don't butcher me,' I whispered hoarsely. 'Cut my accursed throat by all means, but do it neatly. Your scissors are far too blunt.'

"'But how may I sharpen them, darling?' she cried piteously.

"I remembered how I had seen other women do it.

"'Try to cut on the neck of a bottle.'

"'Will that do?'

"'Yes, yes. Keep cutting on the smooth round glass. It's astonishing the difference it makes.'

"'What kind of a bottle, sweetheart?'

"'An ink-bottle's best. You'll find one downstairs on the dining-room mantelpiece. Hurry.'

" ' All right, I'll get it.'

" She flew downstairs. Now was my chance. With my remaining strength I crawled to the door and locked it. When I recovered from a faint her struggles to force it had ceased, and at the same moment I heard the honk of the doctor's auto. Going to the window, I bellowed like a bull. Then I was conscious of a strange thing : by the pressure on my throat, by my struggles, the malignant growth had broken. I was saved."

Anastasia shuddered. " And that Gwendolin ? " she queried.

" Was taken to an asylum, where she died," he said sadly.

" Poor sing," said Anastasia.

To tell the truth, the whole thing had happened to me the night before in a very vivid dream. Often indeed, I get ideas in this way, so I promptly made a story of Nurse Gwendolin.

I was putting the finishing touches to it when a knock came to the door. It was Helstern, panting, perspiring.

" Heavens ! but it's hard climbing that stairway of yours with a game leg. Sorry to disturb you, Madden, but where does the mother of your little girl live ? You don't know how that youngster inspires me. I feel that if I could do a full length of her it would get me into the Salon. See ! here's a sketch. *Spring*, it's called. Of course, I mean to follow up with the other seasons, but I want a child for my Spring."

He showed me a tender *fillette* in a state of nature, trying to avoid tripping over a tame lamb as she scattered abroad an armful of flowers.

" Stunning ! " I said. " So original ! Let's go down and interview the mother."

Into his brown eyes came a look of distress. " I'm a bit awkward with women, you know. Would you mind doing the talking ? "

"Right O! Follow me."

So we descended the narrow, crumbling stairs, from each stage of which came a smell of cookery. Thus we passed through a stratum of ham and eggs, another of corned beef and cabbage, a third of beefsteak and onions, down to the fried fish stratum of the *entresol*.

Frosine was in the midst of dinner. The Môme regarded us over a spoonful of milk soup, and as he wiped the perspiration from his brow, Helstern looked at her almost devouringly. But in the presence of Frosine he seemed almost tongue-tied. To me, who have never known what shyness was, it seemed pitiable. However, I explained our mission, and even showed the sketch at a flattering angle. Frosine listened politely, seemed to want to laugh, then turned to the sculptor with that frank, kindly smile that radiated good fellowship.

"You do me too great honour, Monsieur. I am sure your work would be very beautiful. But alas! Solonge is very shy and very modest. One could never get her to pose for the figure. I am sorry, but believe me, the thing is impossible."

"Thank you, Madam. I am sorry too," he said humbly. He stumped away crestfallen, and with a final, sorrowful look at the Môme.

Anastasia was keeping supper hot for me. "Poor Helstern," I remarked over my second chop, "I'm afraid he'll have to look out for another vernal infant. But talking of Spring reminds me, time is passing and we're not getting any richer. How's the family treasury?"

An examination of the tea-canister that contained our capital revealed the sum of twenty-seven francs. I looked at it ruefully.

"I never dreamed we were so low as that. With care we can live for a week on twenty-seven francs—but what then?"

"You must try and sell some of your work, darleen ; and I—I can sell some *hem-broderie.*"

"Never ! I can't let you sell these things. They're lovely. I want to keep them."

"But I easily do some more. It is pleasure for me."

"No, no ; at least, hold on a bit. I'll make some money, from my work. I'm going to send it off to-morrow."

Yes, we were surely "getting down to cases." But what matter ! Of course, my work will be accepted at once, and paid for on the spot. True, I have no experience in this kind of peddling. My stuff has always appeared virgin in a book. Not that I think I am prostituting it by sending it to a magazine, but that no sooner do I see it in print than my interest in it dies. It belongs to the public then.

Next day I bought a box of big envelopes, a quantity of French and English stamps, and a manuscript book in which I entered the titles of the different items. I also ruled columns : "Where Sent" ; "When Sent" ; even "When Returned," though I thought the latter superfluous. Here then was my list :

The Psychology of Sea-sickness.
An Amateur Lazzarone.
A Detail of Two Cities.
The Microbe.
How to be a Successful Wife.
Nurse Gwendolin.
The City of Light.
The City of Laughter.
The City of Love.
and
Three Fairy Stories.

Twelve items in all. So I prepared them for dispatch ; but where ? That was the question. However, after examining the windows of several English

book-shops, I took a chance shot, posted them to twelve different destinations, and sat down to await results.

Since then, with a fine sense of freedom, I have been indulging in my mania for old houses. I do not mean houses of historic interest, but ramshackle ruins tucked away in seductive slums. To gaze at an old home and imagine its romance is to me more fascinating than trying to realise romance you know occurred there. I examine doors studded with iron, search mouldering walls for inscriptions, peer into curious courtyards. I commune with the spirit of Old Paris; I step in the footprints of Voltaire and Verlaine, of Rousseau and Racine, of Mirabeau and Molière.

One day I visit the room where an English Lord of Letters died more deaths than one. A gloomy, gruesome hotel, with an electric night-sign that goes in and out like some semaphore of sin. A cadaverous, miserable-looking man tells me that the room is at present occupied. I return. A cadaverous, miserable-looking woman whines to a dejected looking valet-de-chambre that I may go up.

It is on the first floor and overlooks a court. There is the bed of varnished pine in which he died; the usual French hotel wardrobe, the usual plush armchair, but not, I note, the usual clock of chocolate marble. Everything so commonplace, so sordid; yet for a moment I could see that fallen demi-god, as with eyes despairful as death in their tear-corroded sockets, he stared and stared into that drab, rain-sodden court.

> For who can tell to what red Hell
> His sightless soul may stray.

And so in sweet, haphazard wanderings amid the Paris of the Past time sped ever so swiftly. I forgot my manuscripts, my position, everything in my sheer delight of freedom; and how long my dream

would have continued I know not if I had not had a sudden awakening. It was on my return from one of my rambles when I drew up with a start in front of a shop that showed all kinds of woman's work for sale.

"Heavens! Surely that isn't Anastasia's cushion?"

I was staring at a piece of exquisite silk embroidery, an imitation of ancient tapestry. No, I could not be mistaken. Too well I remembered every detail of it; how I had watched it take on beauty under her patient fingers; how hour after hour I could hear the crisp snap as the needle broke through the taut silk. Over a week had she toiled on it, rising with the first dawn, so that she might have more daylight in which to blend her colours. And there it was, imbedded in that mass of cheap stuff, and marked with a smudgy paper, "Forty-five francs." Yes, I felt sick.

How careless I had been! I had never given the financial situation another thought, yet we had wanted for nothing. There was that excellent dinner we had had the night before; why, she must have sold this to buy it! Even now I was living on the proceeds of her work.

"What a silly girl! She wouldn't say a word, in case I should be worried. Just like women; they take a fiendish delight in humiliating a man by sacrificing themselves for him. But I can't let her support me. Let's see. . . There's my watch and chain. What's a chain but a useless gaud, a handhold for a pickpocket. Maybe this very afternoon I'll have the whole thing snatched. I'll take no chances; it's a fine, heavy chain, and cost over a hundred dollars; maybe the Mont de Piétists will give me fifty for it."

They wouldn't. Twenty-five was their limit, so I took it meekly. Then, returning hastily to the embroidery shop, I bought the cushion cover,

carried it home under my coat, and locked it safely away in the alligator-skin suitcase.

Though her greeting was bravely bright, it seemed to me that Anastasia had been crying, and of the nice omelette she had provided for my lunch she would scarcely taste.

"What's the trouble, Little Thing; out with it."

She hesitated; looked anxious, miserable, apologetic.

"I don't like trouble you, darleen, but the *concierge* have come for the rent tree time, and I don't know what I must say."

"The rent! I quite forgot that. Why, yes, we pay rent, don't we? How much is it?"

"Don't you remember? One 'undred twenty-five franc."

"Well, there's only one thing to do—pay it. But to do so I must put my ticker up the spout."

"Oh, my poor darleen, I'm so sorry. I sink it is me bring you so much troouble. If it was not for me you have plenty of money, I sink."

"Don't say that. If it wasn't for your economies I'd be rustling for crusts in the gutter. And any way, what's the good of a watch when I can see the time in every shop I pass? Besides, I might lose it; so here goes.

It is quite in tune with the cheerful philosophy of the French to find a virtue in misfortune. Whether they break a glass, spill red wine, or step in dirt, it's all the same: "Ah! but it will carry the good luck."

For my gold watch I received two hundred francs, though it had cost over a thousand; and with this I returned. Much the shape and colour of a bloated spider, the *concierge* emerged from her den, and to her I paid the rent. Then, leaping upstairs, I poured the balance remaining from both transactions into Anastasia's lap.

"There! That ought to keep away the wolf for a month. A hundred and fifty francs and the rent

paid for another quarter. Aren't we the lucky things? The roof's overhead; the soup's in the pot; let's sing. Now do I know why the very wastrels in the street are not so much to be pitied after all; a warm corner and a full belly, that's happiness to them. Wealth's only a matter of wants. Well, we're wealthy, let's go to the cinema."

"No, darleen, that would not be serious. I must guard your money now. When you sink you begeen work once more?"

"I don't know. I'm having one of my bad spells. Funny how it takes one. Times ideas come in a perfect spate, and I miss half grabbing for the others. At present the divine afflatus is on a vacation. I'm trying to start a novel and I haven't got the Idea. You see this short story and article stuff is all very well to boil the *marmite*, but a novel's my real chance. A successful novel would put me on my feet. Pray, Little Thing, I get the idea for a novel."

"Yes, I will, I will indeed," she answered me quite seriously.

And, indeed, she did: for one day I strolled into Notre Dame, and there by one of those hard, high-backed chairs before the mighty altar I discovered her imploring (I have no doubt) the *bon Dieu* that the idea might come.

For simple, shining faith I'm willing to bet my last dollar on Anastasia.

CHAPTER VII

THE MERRY MONTH OF MAY

May 1st

THIS morning in the course of my walk I saw a hungry child trying to sell violets, a girl gazing fearfully at the Maternity Hospital, an old woman picking, as if they were gold, coals from the gutter. At times what a world of poignant drama these common sights reveal! It is like getting one's eye to a telescope that is focussed on a world of interesting misery. I want to write of these things, but I must not. First of all I must write for money; that gained, I may write for art.

So far I haven't hit on my novel *motif*, though I've lain awake at nights racking my poor brains. What makes me fret so is that never have I felt such confidence, such power, such hunger to create. I think it must be Paris and the Springtime. The combination makes me dithyrambic with delight. I thrill, I burn, I see life with eyes anointed. Yesterday in the Luxembourg I wrote some verses that weren't half bad; but writing verses does not make the thorns crackle under the pot, far less supply the savoury soup. Oh, the Idea, the Idea!

To my little band of manuscripts I have never given another thought. But that is my way. I am like a mother cat—when my kittens are young I love them; when they grow to be cats I spit at them. My work finished, I never want to see it again.

One day as I fumed and fussed abominably Lorrimer called.

"Look here, Madden, I don't know what kind of

writing you do, but I suppose you're not any too beastly rich; you're not above making an honest dollar. Now, I'm one of the future gold medallists of the Spring Salon, *cela va sans dire*, but in the meantime I'm not above doing this."

"This" was a paper-covered booklet of a flaming type. I took it wth some disfavour. The paper was muddy, the type disreputable, the illustrations lurid. Turning it over I read:

THE MARVELLOUS PENNYWORTH LIBRARY
OF WORLD ADVENTURE.

"Pretty rotten, isn't it?" said Lorrimer. "Well, you wouldn't believe it, some of these things sell to nearly quarter of a million. They give the best value for the money in their line. Fifty pages of straight adventure and a dozen spirited illustrations for a humble copper; could you beat it?"

"Well, what's it got to do with me?"

"It's like this: I've been guilty of the illustrations of two of these masterpieces. They were Wild West stories. Being an American, though I've never lived out of Connecticut, I'm supposed to know all about Colorado. Well, it's the firm of Shortcake & Hammer that publish them, and I happened to meet young Percy Shortcake when he was on a jamboree in Paris. Over the wassail we got free, so he promised to put some work my way. Soon after I got a commission to illustrate *Sure-shot, or the Scout's Revenge;* then some months after I adorned the pages of *Redhand the Nightrider; or, the Prowler of the Prairies.*"

"I see. What's the idea now."

"The idea is that you write one of these things and I illustrate it."

"My dear fellow, you have too high an opinion of my powers."

"Oh, come now, Madden, try You won't throw

me down, old man. I need the money. Supposing we place it, we'll get a ten pound note for it ; that will be seven for you and three for me. Three pounds, man, that will keep me for a month, give me time to finish my prize picture for the Salon. Just think what it means to me, what a crisis in my fortunes. Fame there ready to crown me, and for the want of a measly three quid, biff ! there she chucks her crown back in the laurel bin for another year. Oh, Madden, try. I'm sure you could rise to the occasion."

Thus approached, how could a kind-hearted Irishman refuse ? Already I saw Lorrimer gold-medalled, glorified ; then the reverse of the picture, Lorrimer writhing in the clutches of dissipation and despair. Could I desert him ? I yielded.

"Good !" whooped Lorrimer ; "we'll make a best-seller in Penny-dreadfuldom. Take *Sureshot* here as a model. Here, too, are your illustrations."

"My what ?"

"The pictures. Oh yes, I did them first. It doesn't make any difference, you can make them fit in. It's often done that way. Half the books published for Christmas sale are written up to illustrations that the publishers have on hand."

"All right. The illustrations may suggest the story."

Lorrimer went away exultant. After all, I thought, seven pounds won't be bad for a week's work. So I read *Sureshot* with some care. It was divided into twenty chapters of about a thousand words each, and every chapter finished on a situation of suspense. The sentences were jerkily short ; each was full of pith and punch, and often had a paragraph of all to itself. For example :

> By one hand Sureshot clung to that creaking bough. Below him was empty space. Above him leered his foe, Poisoned Pup, black hate in his face.
>
> The branch cracked ominously.
>
> With a shudder the Lone Scout looked down to the

bottom of the abyss. No way of escape there. He looked up once more, and even as he looked Poisoned Pup raised his tomahawk to sever the frail branch.

"Perish! Paleface," he hissed. "Go down to the Gulf of the Lost Ones, and let the wolves pick clean your bones."

Sureshot felt that his last hour had come.

"Accursed Redskin," he cried, "do your worst. But beware, for I will be avenged. And now, O son of a dog, strike, strike!"

And there with gleaming eyes the intrepid scout waited for that glittering axe to fall.

End of chapter; the next of which artfully switches and takes up another thread of the story.

The result of my effort was that in six days I produced *Daredeath Dick, or the Scourge of the Sierras*. Lorrimer was enthusiastic.

"Didn't think you had it in you, old man. I'll get it off to Shortcake & Hammer at once. It will likely be some weeks before we can hear from them."

Since then I have been seeing quite a lot of Lorrimer. After all, our little apartment is cosiness itself, and beer at four sous a litre is ambrosia within reach of the most modest purse. He talks vastly of his work (with a capital W). He arrives with the announcement that he has just dropped in for a quiet pipe; in an hour he must be back at his Work. Then: "Well, old man, just another short pipe, and I must really be off." But in the end he takes his departure about two in the morning, sometimes talking me asleep.

How he lives is a mystery. Any evening you can see him in the café D'Harcourt, or the Soufflet, and generally accompanied by Rougette. When he is in funds he spends recklessly. Once he gained a prize for a Moulin Rouge poster, and celebrated his success in a supper that cost him three times the value of his prize. Sometimes he contributes a very naughty drawing to *Pages Folles*, and I know that he does *aquarelles* for the long-haired genius

who sells them on the boulevards, and who, though he can draw little else than a cork from a bottle, in appearance out-rapins the *rapins*.

One afternoon I heard Helstern painfully toiling upstairs.

"I've got an idea," he began. "You know as soon as I set eyes on the mother of your little Solonge I saw she was just the type I've been looking for for my group, Maternity. That woman's a born mother, a mother by destiny. See, here's a sketch of my group."

Helstern's statues, I notice, seldom get beyond the sketch stage. This one showed a mother suckling an infant and gazing fondly at another little girl, who in her turn was looking maternally at the baby.

"That's all very well," I objected banally; "but Frosine hasn't got a baby."

"Pooh! a mere trifle. I'll soon supply the baby. Already I see my group crowned in the Salon. The thing's as good as done. It only remains for you to go down and get the consent of Madam."

"Me!"

"Why, yes. You know I'm no good at talking to women. It takes an Irishman to be persuasive. Go on, there's a good fellow."

Was I ever able to resist an appeal to my vanity? But pretty soon I returned rather crestfallen.

"It's no use, old man. Can't make anything of the lady. I showed her your sketch; I offered to provide the infant; I pointed out the sensation it would make in the Salon; no use. She positively refuses to pose; prefers to sew lingerie. If she would be serious I might be able to wheedle her; but she only laughs, and when a woman laughs I've got to laugh with her. But I can't help thinking there's something at the back of her refusal."

"Well, well," sighed the big sculptor, "I give her up. And already I could see the crowds admiring my group as it stood under the dome of

the Grand Palace ; already I could hear their plaudits ringing in my ears ; already . . ."

Once more he sighed deeply, and went away.

May 15th.

It is so hot to-day that I think Summer must have taken the wrong cue. On the Boul' Mich' the *marronniers* sicken in the stale air composed equally of asphalt, petrol and escaping gas. Assyrian bearded students and Aubrey Beardsley *cocottes* are sitting over opaline glasses in front of the stifling cafés, and the dolphins in the fountains of the Observatory spout enthusiastically. Now is the time to loll on a shaded bench in the Luxembourg Gardens, and refrain from doing anything strenuous.

So I sit there dreaming, and note in a careless way that I am becoming conspicuously shabby. Because the necessary franc for the barber cannot well be spared I have allowed my hair to accumulate æsthetically. Anastasia loves it like that—says it makes me look like the great man of letters I am ; and with a piece of silk she has made me a Lavalliere tie. More than ever I feel like a character in a French farce.

My boots, I particularly note, need heeling. Every morning I conscientiously brush them before I go out, but invariably I am called back.

" Show me your feet."

I bow before this domestic tyrant.

" Oh, what a dirty boy it is. What shame for me to have husbands go out like that."

" But look ! " I protest " they're clean. They shine like a mirror. Why, you can see your face in them—if you look hard enough."

" But the heels ! Look at the heels. Why you have not brush them. Oh I nevaire see child like that. You just brush in front."

" Well, how can I see the heels. I'm no contortionist."

"Oh, *mon Dieu*! He brush his boots after he puts them on. Oh, what a cabbage head I have for husband!"

"Well, isn't that the right way?"

"*Nom d'un chien*! Give me your *patte*."

Then what a storm if I try to go out with a hole in my socks!

"Oh, dear! I nevaire see man like that. Suppose you get keel in the street, and someone take off your boots, sink how you are shamed. What shame for me, too, if I have husband's keel wiz hole in his sock!"

In addition to her other duties I have made her my secretary. Alas! I must confess some of my valiant manuscripts have come sneaking back with unflattering promptitude. It is a new experience and a bitter one. Yet I think my chief concern is that Anastasia's faith in me should be shattered. After the first unbelieving moment I threw the things aside in disgust.

"They're no good. I'll never send them out again."

"Oh, don't say that, darleen. You geeve to me and I send away some more."

"Do what you like," I answered savagely. "But don't let me see the beastly things again. And don't, I added thoughtfully, "send them twice to the same place."

So what is happening I know not, though the expense for stamps is a grievous one. She has a list of periodicals and is posting the things somewhere. Perhaps she may blunder luckily. Anyway, I don't care. I'm sick of them.

May 30th.

Some days ago I was sitting by the gate of the Luxembourg that fronts the bust of St. Beuve. That fine, shrewd face seemed to smile at me with pawky kindliness, as if to say: "Don't despair,

young men ; seek, seek, for the luminous idea will come."

But just then it was more pleasant to dream than to seek. A slim pine threw on the sun-flooded lawn its purple pool of shadow ; in the warm breeze a thickset yew heaved gently ; a lively acacia twinkled and fluttered ; a silver-stemmed birch tossed enthusiastic plumes. Over a bank of golden lilies bright-winged butterflies were hovering, and in a glade beyond there was a patch of creamy hyacinths. Against the ivy that mantled an old oak, the white dress of a girl outgleamed, and her hat, scarlet as a geranium, made a sparkling note of colour.

Then, as she drew near I saw it was Anastasia, and she was much excited. I wondered why. Is there anything in this world, I asked myself, worth while getting excited about ? Just then I was inclined to think not ; so I smoked on imperturbably. The vacuum in my life made by the lack of tobacco had been more than I could bear, and I had taken to those cheap packets of Caporal, *cigarettes bleues*, whose luxuriant whiskers I surreptitiously trimmed with Anastasia's embroidery scissors. Never shall I be one of those kill-joys who recommend young men not to smoke—in the meantime filling up their own pipes with particular gusto.

"Hullo, Little Thing ! Why this unexpected pleasure ? "

"Oh, I search you everywhere. See ! there's letter from editor."

"So it is ; and judging by your excitement it must contain at least twenty pounds. Already I wallow in the sands of Pactolus. . . . Yes, you're right : a cheque. How long it seems since I've seen a cqehue ! Let's see—why ! it's for a whole guinea."

Her eyes gleamed with pleasure, and she clapped her hands.

"In payment," I went on, "of the article *How to be a Successful Wife*, from the editor of *Baby's Own*, a weekly magazine specially devoted to the nursery."

"Yes, yes. I send heem zere. I sink it's so *chic*, that magazine."

"Well, I congratulate you on your first success as a literary agent. You deserve your ten per cent. commission. It isn't the Eldorado of our dreams, but it will enable us to carry out some needed sartorial reforms. For example, I may now get my boots persuaded to a new lease of life, while you may buy some stuff for a blouse. How much can we do on twenty-six francs?"

Between Necessary Expenditure and Cash in Hand the difference was appalling, but after elaborate debate the money was duly appropriated. From this time on Anastasia became more energetic than ever in her consumption of postage. It was about this time, too, I noticed she ate very sparingly. On my taxing her, she declared she was dieting. She was afraid, she said, of getting fat. On which I decided I also was getting fat: I too must diet. Everyone, we agreed, ate too much. I for one (I vowed) could do better work on a mess of pottage than on all the fleshpots of Egypt. So the expenses of our menage began to take a very low figure indeed.

At the same time "Soup of the Onion" began to make its appearance with a monotonous frequency. It is made by frying the fragments of one of these vegetables till it is nearly black. You then add hot water, boil a little, strain. The result is a warm, yellowish liquor of onionish suggestion, which an ardent imagination may transform into a delicate and nourishing soup—and which costs about one sou.

A sudden reversion, however, to a more generous *cuisine* aroused my suspicion, and on visiting the little embroidery shop, again I saw some of her work. I

made a rapid calculation. Of my personal possessions there only remained to me my gold signet ring, and the seal that had hung at the end of my chain. For the first I got fifty francs, for the second, twenty. So for thirty francs I bought her work, and locked it away with the cushion cover.

I am really beginning to despair to think I shall have to give in. Oh, the bitterness of surrender! All that is mulish in me revolts at the thought. For myself rather would I starve than be beaten, but there is the girl, she must not be allowed to suffer.

May 31*st.*

This has been a happy day, such a happy day as never before have I known. This morning Lorrimer burst into my apartment flourishing a cheque for *The Scourge of the Sierras*. Shortcake & Hammer expressed themselves as well pleased, and sent—not ten pounds but twelve.

"I tell you what!" cried the artist excitedly, "we've got to celebrate your success as a popular author. We'll spend the extra two pounds on a dinner. We'll ask Rougette and Helstern, and we'll have it to-night in the Café d'Harcourt."

He is one of those human steam-rollers who crush down all opposition; so that night we five met in the merriest café in the Boul' Mich.' Below its bizarre frescoes of student life we had our table, and considering that four of us did not know where the next month's rent was coming from we were a notably gay party.

Oh, you unfortunates who dine well every day of your lives, little do you guess the gastronomic bliss of those whose lives are one long Lent! Never could you have vanquished, as we, that host of insidious *hors-d'œuvres;* never beset as we that bouillon with the brown bread drowned in it. How the crisp fried soles shrank in their shrimp sauce at the spectacle of our devouring rage, and the

filet mignon hid in fear under its juicy mushrooms! The salad of chicken and *haricots verts* seemed to turn still greener with terror, and, as it vanished in total rout, after it we hurled a bomb of Neapolitan ice cream. And the wine! How splendid to have all the Beaune one wants after a course of "Château La Pompe!" And those two bottles of sunshine and laughter from the vaults of Rheims—not more radiantly did they overflow than did our spirits! And so sipping our *cafés filtre*, we watched the crowd and all the world looked glorious.

The place had filled with the usual mob of students, models and *filles-de-joie*, and the scene was of more than the usual gaiety. The country had just been swept by a wave of military enthusiasm; patriotism was rampant; the female orchestra perspired in its efforts to be heard. Everyone seemed to be thumping on tables with bocks, and two hundred voices were singing:

> Encore un petit verre de vin pour nous mettre en route;
> Encore un petit verre de vin pour nous mettre en train.

Someone started Fragson's *En avant, mes petits Gars*, and there was more stamping, shouting and banging of bocks. Then the orchestra broke into the melody for which all were longing:

> Allons, enfants de la Patrie,
> Le jour de gloire est arrivé.

All were up on their seats now, and the song finished in a furore of enthusiasm.

The generous wine had affected us three men differently. Lorrimer was loquacious, Helstern gloomy, while I was inclined to sleep.

"Bah!" Helstern was saying: "This fire and fury, what is it? A mask to hide a desperate uneasiness. Poor France! There she is like some overfat ewe; there is the Prussian Wolf

waiting ; but look ! between them the paw of the Lion."*

He represented the fat ewe with the sugar bowl, the wolf with the cream jug, and laid his big hand in between.

" Poor France ! " broke in the girls. Rougette was more brilliantly pretty than ever, and her eyes flashed with indignation. Even the gentle Anastasia was roused to mild resentment.

" Yes," went on Helstern, " you're a great race, but you're too old. You've got to go as they all went, Greece, Rome, Italy, Spain. England will follow, then Germany, last of all Russia."

" For Heaven's sake ! " broke in Lorrimer noisily, " don't let him get on the subject of International Destinies. What does it matter to us. To-day's the only time worth considering. Let's think of our own destinies : mine as the coming Gerome, Helstern's as the coming Rodin, and Madden's as the coming Sylvanus Cobb."

But I did not heed him. Drowsy content had possession of me. " Seven pounds," I was thinking ; " that means the sinews of war for another month. Oh, if I could only get some kind of an idea for that novel ! What is Lorrimer babbling about now ? "

" Marriage," he was saying ; " I don't believe in marriage. The first year people are married they are happy, the second contented, the third resigned. There should be a new deal every three years. Why, if a general dispensation of divorce were to be granted, half of the married couples would break away so quick it would make your head swim."

" Oh, Monsieur, you are shocking," said Anastasia.

" What shocks to-day is a commonplace to-morrow. There will come a time when the custom that condemns a couple to bore one another for life will be considered a barbaric one. Why penalise people eternally for the aberration of a season ?

* This was written in the Spring of 1914.

Three-year marriages would give life back its colour, its passion, its romance. People so soon grow physically indifferent to each other. Flavoured with domesticity kisses lose their rapture."

"You have the sentiments *épouventable*," said Anastasia. "Wait till you have marry."

"Me! You'll never see me in the valley of the shadow of matrimony. Would you spoil a good lover by making an indifferent husband of him? No, we never care for the things we have, and we always want those we haven't. If I were married to Helen of Troy I'd be sneaking side glances at some little Mimi Pinson across the way. And by the same token, Madam, keep your eye on that husband of yours, for even now he's looking pretty hard at some one else."

And indeed I was, for there across the room was the girl from Naples, Lucrezia Poppolini.

CHAPTER VIII

"TOM, DICK AND HARRY"

THE partner who managed the forwarding department of the firm of Madden & Company reported to the partner who represented its manufacturing end that the editor of the *Babbler* had accepted his story, *The Microbe*, for one of his weekly Tabloid Tales. A cheque was enclosed for three guineas.

The manufacturing partner looked up in a dazed way from his manuscript, tapped his mighty brain to quicken recollection of the story in question, signified his approval, and bent again to his labours. Being in the heart of a novel he dreaded distraction. These necessary recognitions of every-day existence made it harder for him to lift himself back again into his world of dream.

However, in his sustained fits of abstraction he had a worthy ally in the forwarding partner. Things came to his hand in the most magical way, and his every wish seemed anticipated. It was as if the whole scheme of life conspired to favour the flow of inspiration. Thus, when he was quietly told that lunch was ready, and instead of eating would gaze vacantly at the butter, there was no suggestion of his impending insanity; neither, when he poured tea into the sugar basin instead of into his cup, was there any demonstration of alarm.

On the other hand, the forwarding partner might often have been seen turning over the English magazines displayed in front of the booksellers, and noting their office addresses. She was wonderfully persistent, but woefully unfortunate. Even the New York-London article, which the manufacturing partner had told her to send to the *Gotham Gleaner*,

had been returned. The editor was a personal friend of his, and had the article been signed in his own name would probably have taken it. As it was it did not get beyond a sub-editor.

"Throw the thing into the fire," he said savagely when she told him; but she promptly sent it to the Sunday Magazine section of the *New York Monitor*. After that she was silent on the subject of returned manuscripts.

* * * * * *

I have forbidden Anastasia to sell any more embroidery, so that she no longer spends long and late hours over her needle. Instead she hovers about me anxiously, doing her work with the least possible commotion.

I have given her the forty francs remaining from the sale of my seal and ring, and that, with the three guineas from the *Babbler*, is enough to carry us on for another month. It is extraordinary how we just manage to scrape along.

I wish to avoid all financial worry just now. My story has taken hold of me and is writing itself at the rate of three thousand words a day. No time now to spend on meticulous considerations of style; as I try to put down my teeming thoughts my pencil cannot travel fast enough. It is the same frenzy of narration with which I rattled off *The Haunted Taxicab* and its fellow culprits. If at times that new-born conscience of mine gives me qualms, I dull them with the thought that it is just a tale told to amuse and—oh, how I need the money!

And now to come to my novel, *Tom, Dick and Harry*.

Three cockney clerks on a ten days' vacation, are tramping over a desolate moor in Wales. Tom is a dreamer with a turn for literature; Dick an adventurer who hates his desk; Harry an entertainer, with remote designs on the stage.

The scenery is wild and rugged. The rough winds

between great boulders that suggest a prehistoric race. The wind of the moor brings a glow to their cheeks, and their pipes are in full blast. Suddenly outspeaks Tom :

" Wouldn't it be funny, you fellows, if a man clad in skins were suddenly to dodge out from behind one of these rocks, and we were to find that we were back in the world of a thousand years ago—just as we are now, you know, with all our knowledge of things."

" It wouldn't be funny at all," said Dick. " How could we make use of our knowledge ? What would we do for a living ? "

" Well," said Tom thoughtfully, " I think I would go in for the prophecy business. I could foretell things that were going to happen, and—yes, I think I'd try my hand at literary plagiarism. With all my reading I could rehash enough modern yarns to put all the tribal story-tellers out of business. I'd become the greatest yarn-spinner in the world. What would you do, Hal ? "

" Oh, I don't think I'd have any trouble," said Harry. " I'd become the King's harper. I think I could vamp on the harp all right. I'd revive all the popular songs of the last ten years, all the minstrel songs, all the sentimental ballads, all the national airs, and I'd set them to topical words. I'd become the greatest minstrel in the world. Now Dick, it's your turn."

Dick considered for so long that they fancied he was at a loss. At last he drew a deep breath.

" I know—I'd discover America."

They thought no more about it, and next day went gaily a-climbing a local mountain. But Tom, who was a poor climber, lagged behind his companions, and began to slip. Clawing frantically at the rough rock over the edge of the bluff he went, and fell to the bottom with a crash.

When he opened his eyes his head ached horribly.

Putting up his hand he found his scalp clotted with blood. The heavy mist shut off everything but a small circle all round him. As he lay wondering what had become of his companions, suddenly he became aware of strange people regarding him. Gradually they came nearer, and he saw that they were clad in skins.

Well, they take him prisoner and carry him off to their village, where their head man questions him in an uncouth dialect. Then they send for a sage who also questions him, and is much mystified at his replies. "This wise greybeard," thinks Tom, "seems to know less than an average school-boy."

Then comes the news that two more of the strange creatures have been captured. Once again the trio are united.

"It's a rum go," said Dick. "Seems we've slipped back a thousand years."

"What particular period of history have we climbed off at?" demanded Harry.

"It looks to me," said Tom, "as if we were in Saxon England, just before the Norman Invasion. From what the old gentlemen tell me Harold is the big chief."

"What will we do?"

"Seems to me we'll be all right. With a thousand years or so of experience ahead of those fellows we ought to become great men in this land. We were mighty small fry in old London. I wish I was an engineer, I'd invent gunpowder or something."

"We'd better carry out our original plans," said Dick.

By and by came messengers from the king, who wished to see these strange beings descended on his earth from a star. And, indeed, it seemed to the three friends as if they had really dropped on some planet a thousand years less advanced than ours (for given similar beginnings and conditions, will not history go on repeating itself?). In any case, the

king received them with wonder and respect, and straightway they were attached to the royal household.

Gradually they adapted themselves to mediæval ways, became accustomed to sleeping on straw, and to eating like pigs ; but even to the last they did not cease to deplore the absence of small-tooth combs in the toilet equipment of the royal family.

The book goes on to trace the fortunes of each of its three heroes. It tells how Harry captivated the court with a buck-and-wing dance, set them turkey-trotting to the strains of " Hitchy Koo," and bunny-hugging to the melody of " Down the Mississippi." He even opened a private class for lessons in the Tango, and initiated Tango Teas in which mead replaced the fragrant orange pekoe. He invented the first banjo, demoralised the court with the first ragtime. You should have heard King Harold joining in the chorus of " Waiting for the Robert E. Lee," or singing as a solo " You Made Me Love You." Decidedly Harry bid fair to be the most popular man in the kingdom.

But Tom was running him a pretty close race. He had become the Royal Story-teller, and nightly held them breathless while he thrilled them with such marvels as horseless chariots, men who fly with wings, and lightning harnessed till it makes the night like day. Yet when he hinted that such things may even come to pass, what a howl of derision went up !

" Ah, no ! " cried King Harold, " these be not the deeds of men but of the very gods." And all the wise men of the land wagged their grey beards in approval.

So after that he gave Truth the cold shoulder, and found fiction more grateful. He reconstructed all the stock plots of to-day, giving them a Saxon setting ; and the characters that had taken the strongest hold on the popular imagination he

rehabilitated in Saxon guise. The most childish tales would suffice. Night after night would he rivet their attention with "Aladdin" or "Bluebeard," or "Jack and the Beanstalk." Just as Harry had made all the minstrels rend their harp-strings in despair, so Tom made all the story-tellers blush with shame and take to the Hinterlands.

Poor Dick, however, was having a harder time of it. Like a man inspired he was raving of a wonderful land many days' sail beyond the sea. But the stolid Saxons refused to believe him. "Fancy believing one who says the world is round! Surely the man is mad."

At last he fell in with some Danes who, seeing an opportunity for piracy, agreed to let him be their pilot to this golden land. They fitted out a vessel, and sailed away to the West. But they were storm-driven for many days, and finally their boat was wrecked on the Arran Islands.

In the meantime, William the Conqueror came on the scene, and King Harold, refusing to listen to the warning of Tom, gave fight to the Norman. Then Tom and Harry beheld with their modern eyes that epoch-making battle.

"Oh for a hundred men armed with modern rifles!" said Tom; "then we could conquer the whole world."

But with the subjugation of the Saxon, dark days follow for the three friends. Harry, trying to get a footing in the new Court, and struggling with the new language, is stabbed by a jealous court jester. Dick, having escaped from the irate Danes, marries an Irish princess and becomes one of the Irish kings. Tom, continuing to indulge in his gift for prophecy, incurs the dislike of the Church and is thrown into prison. Then one bright morning he is led to be executed. He lays his head on the block. The executioner raises his axe. There is sudden blankness . . . .

" Yes, very interesting case," he hears the doctor saying. " Fell thirty feet. Came nasty whack on the rocks. We've trepanned . . . expect him to recover consciousness quite soon."

* * * * * *

One morning, about the beginning of July, I was leading Dick through a whirl of adventure in the wilds of darkest Ireland, when Anastasia entered. I looked at her blankly.

" Hullo ! What's wrong now ? "

" Oh ! I am desolate. Please excuse me for trouble you, darleen, but there is no help for it. We have forgot the rent, and once more it is necessary to be paid."

" Oh, the rent, the awful, inevitable rent ! What a cursed institution it is ! Well, Little Thing, I've no money."

" What we do, darleen."

" It's very unfortunate. I'm getting on so nicely with my novel, and here I have to break off and worry over matters of sordid finance."

" I'm so sorry. Let me sell some of my *hem-broderie*. I sink I catch some money for that."

" No, I hate to let you do that. Stop ! We'll compromise. Give me what you have and I'll put it ' up the spout.' It will be only for a little while."

So she gave me a cushion cover, two centre pieces, and some little mats.

" How much money is left ? " I asked.

" Only about eleven francs."

" Hum ! That won't help us much. All right. Leave it to me, and whatever you do, don't worry. I'll raise the wind somehow."

So I took the suit case, with the pieces of embroidery I had previously bought, and carried the whole thing to the Mont de Piété. I realised seventy francs for the whole thing.

" There you are," I said on my return. " With the eleven francs you have, that makes eighty one.

You'd better pay the rent for one month only. Then we will have forty francs left. We can struggle along on that for two weeks. By that time something else will be sure to turn up."

Something did turn up—the very next day. The editor of a cheap Weekly, who had already began to make plans for his special Christmas Number, wrote and offered to take my diphtheria story if I would give it a Christmas setting. I growled, and used shocking language ; but in the end I laid aside my novel and re-christening the story *My Terrible Christmas*, I made the necessary changes. Result : another cheque for a guinea.

How she managed to last out the balance of the month on an average of two francs a day I never knew. I discontinued my morning walks, giving all my time to my novel, and thinking of nothing else. I was dimly conscious that once more we were in the " Soup of the Onion " zone, but as I sat down dazed to my meals I scarce knew what I ate. I was all keyed up, with my eyes on the goal. I would compose whole chapters in my dreams, and sleeping or waking, my mind was never off my work.

Then came an evil week when the power of production completely left me. How I cursed and fretted. I was sick of the whole trade of writing. What a sorry craft ! And my work was rotten. I hated it. A fog overhung my brain, I saw the whole world with distempered eyes. I started out on long walks around the fortifications, and as I walked everything seemed unreal to me. I was like an automaton ; I seemed to lose all sense of my identity. Yet the fresh air was good to me, and the waving of green leaves had a strange sweetness. The river, too, soothed me ; then one day all my interest in the world came back.

At six o'clock that evening I began to work, and all night through I wrote like a madman. As I

finished covering a sheet I would throw it on the floor and grab a fresh one. I was conscious that my wrist ached infernally. The dawn came and found me still writing, my face drawn, my eyes staring vaguely. Then at eleven in the morning I had finished. I was islanded in a sea of sheets, over twelve thousand words.

"Please pick them up for me," I asked her. "I'm afraid it's awful stuff, but I just had to go on. Everything seemed so plain, and I just wanted to get it down and out of my mind. Well, it's done, my novel's done. See, I've written the sweetest of all words: 'Finis.' But I'm so tired. No, I don't want any lunch. I'll just lie down a bit."

With a feeling of happiness that was like a flood of sunshine I crept into bed, and there I slept till eight of the following morning. Next day all I did was to loaf around the Luxembourg in the joyance of leaf and flower. I was still fagged, but so happy. As I smoked a tranquil pipe I watched the children on the merry-go-round. They were given little spears, with which to tilt at rings hung round the course, and if they bagged a certain number they were entitled to a seat for the next round. To watch the rosy and eager faces of these youthful knights on their fiery steeds, as they rode with lances couched, was a gentle specific for the soul.

Yes, everything seemed so good, so bright, so beneficent. I loved that picture, full of freshness, gaiety and youth. Anastasia and the Môme joined me, and we listened to the band under the *marronniers*. Then we lingered on the Terrace of the Queen's to watch the sky behind the *Tower Eiffel* kindle to a glow of amber, and a wondrous golden tide o'erflooding the groves till each leaf seemed radiant and the fountain exulted in a spray of flame.

Suddenly the Môme gave a cry of delight. Listen! In the distance we could hear a noise like a hum of bees. It is the little soldier, who every evening at

closing time, parades the garden with his drum, warning everyone it is time to go. This to the children is the crown of all the happy day. Hasten Sylvere and Yvonne—it is the little soldier. Fall in line, François and Odette, we must march to the music. Gather round Cyprille, Maurice, Victoire: follow to the rattle of the drum. Here he comes, the little blue and red soldier. How sturdily he beats! With what imperturbable dignity he marches amid that scampering, jostling, laughing, shouting mob of merry-hearted children!

"After all," I observe, "struggle, poverty and hard work give us moments of joy such as the rich never know. I want to put it on record, that though we are nearly at the end of our resources, this has been one of the happiest days of my life."

"I weesh you let me go to work, darleen. I make some money for help. I sew for dressmaker if you let me."

"Never. How near are we to the end?"

"I have enough for to-morrow only."

"That's bad." I didn't say any more. A gloom fell on my spirits.

"A letter for Monsieur," said the concierge, as with heavy hearts and slow steps we mounted to our rooms. I handed it to Anastasia.

"Open it, Little Thing; it's in your department."

She did so; she gave a little scream of delight.

"Look! it's for that article I send to *New York Monitor*. He geeve you cheque. Let me see . . . Oh, *mon Dieu*! one hundred franc! good, good, now we are save!"

I took it quickly.

"One hundred francs nothing," I said. "Young woman, you've got to get next to our monetary system. That's not one hundred francs; that's one hundred dollars—*five* hundred francs. Why, what's the matter?"

For Anastasia had promptly fainted.

CHAPTER IX

AN UNEXPECTED DEVELOPMENT

I ASCRIBED Anastasia's fainting spell to the somewhat sketchy meals we had been having; so for the next few weeks I fed her up anxiously. That same evening we held a special meeting of the Finance Committee to consider our improved position.

"Be under no illusion," I observed as Chairman, "with reference to our recent success. It is not, as you might imagine, the turn of the tide. There are three reasons why this particular article was accepted: First, it was snappy and up-to-date; second, it compared Manhattan and Modern Babylon in a way favourable to the former; third, and chief reason, the editor happened to have some very good cuts that he could work in to make an attractive spread. Given these inducements, and a temporary lack of more exciting matter, any offering can dispense with such a detail as literary merit."

Here I regarded some jottings I had made on an envelope.

"Let us now see how we stand. We started with twelve manuscripts, of which we have sold four. There remain five more articles, and three fairy stories. The articles I regard as time wasted. People won't read straight descriptive stuff; even in novels one has to sneak it in."

Here the Secretary regarded ruefully some manuscripts rather the worse for postal transit.

"Go on wasting stamps on them if you like," I continued; "but, candidly, they're the wrong thing. As for the fairy stories, where are they now?"

"I have sent them to the *Pickadeely Magazine*."

"They might have some chance there. The editor devotes a certain space to children that aren't grown up. Now as to funds."

The Secretary sat down, and the Treasurer rose in her place. She stated that there were five hundred francs in the treasury, of which a hundred would be needed to pay the rent up to the end of September. Two hundred francs would have to be allowed for current expenses; that would leave a hundred for contingencies.

"Very good," I said; "I move that the money be expended as suggested. And now—two blissful months of freedom from worry in which to re-write my novel. Thank Heaven!"

With that I plunged into my work as strenuously as before. I must confess I re-read it with a tremor. It was bad, but—not too bad. Unconsciously I had reverted to my yarn-spinning style, yet often in the white heat of inspiration I had hit on the master-word just as surely as if I had pondered half a day. However, the result as a whole I regarded with disfavour. The work was lacking in distinction, in reserve, in the fine art of understatement. Instead of keeping my story well in hand I had let it gallop away with me. Truly I was incorrigible.

"Anastasia," I said one day, as I was about half through with my revision, "you're always asking if there's no way you can help me. I can suggest one."

"Oh, good! What is it?"

"Well, I know where I can hire a typewriter for a month very cheaply. You might try your hand at punching out this wonderful work of fiction on it."

"Oh, that please me very much."

"All right. I'll fetch the instrument of torture."

It was a very old machine, of eccentric mechanism and uncouth appearance. With fumbling hesitation she began. About a word a minute was her average,

and that word a mistake ; but rapidly she progressed. Sometimes I would hear a vigorous : *Nom d'un chien* ! " and would find that she had gone over the same line twice. Then again, she would get her carbon paper wrong, and the duplicate would come out on the back of the original. At other times it was only that she had run over the edge of the paper.

The typewriter, too, was somewhat lethargic in action. It seemed to say : " I'm so old in service, and my joints are so stiff—surely I might be allowed to take my own time. If you try to hurry me I'll get my fingers tangled, or I'll jam my ribband, or I'll make all kinds of mistakes. Really, it's time I was superannuated." No beginner, even in a Business School, ever tackled a more decrepit and cantankerous machine, and it said much for her patience that she turned out such good copy.

So passed August and most of September—day after day of grinding work in sweltering heat ; I, pruning, piecing, chopping, changing ; she pounding patiently at that malcontent machine. Then at last, after a long, hard day it was done. The sunshine was mellow on the roofs as I watched her write the closing words. She handed the page to me, and, regarding the sunlight almost sorrowfully, she folded her tired hands.

Two tears stole down her pale cheeks.

All at once I saw how worn and weary she was. Thin, gentle, sad—more than ever like a child she looked, with her exquisite profile, and the heaped-up masses of her dark hair ; more than ever like a child with her shrinking figure and her delicate pallor : yet she would soon be nineteen. The idea came to me that in my passion of creative egotism I had given little thought of her.

" Why, what's the matter, Little Thing ? Are you sick ? "

She looked at me piteously.

"Have you not see? Have you not guess?"

"No, what?" I demanded in a tone of alarm.

"Pretty soon you are going to be a fazzaire."

"My God!"

I could only gasp and stare at her.

"Well, are you not going to kees me, and say you are not sorry?"

"Yes, yes. There, Little Thing . . . I—I'm glad."

But there was no conviction in my tone, and I sat gazing into vacancy. In my intense preoccupation never had such a thing occurred to me. It came as a shock, as something improper, as one of those brutal realities that break in so woefully on the serenities of life. There was a ridiculous side to it, too. I saw myself sheepishly wheeling a baby carriage, and I muttered with set teeth: "Never!"

"Confound it all! It's so embarrassing," I thought distressfully. "It upsets my whole programme. It makes life more complex, and I am trying to make it more simple. It gives me new responsibilities, and my every effort is to avoid them. Worst of all, it seems to sound the death-knell of my youth. To feel like a boy has always been my ideal of well-being, and how can one feel like a boy with a rising son to remind one of maturity?"

Perhaps, however, it would be a daughter. Somehow that didn't seem so bad. So to change the subject I suggested that we take a walk along the river. As we went through the Tuilleries all of the western city seemed to wallow in flame. The sky rolled up in tawny orange, and the twin towers of the Trocadero were like arms raised in distress amid a conflagration. The river was a welter of lilac fire, while above the portal of the Grand Palace the chariot driver held his rearing horses in a blaze of glory. To the east all was light and enchantment, as a thousand windows burned like imperial

gems, and tower and spire and dome shimmered in a delicate dust of gold.

"What a city, this Paris!" I murmured. "Add but three letters to it, and you have Paradise."

"Where you are, darleen, to me it is always Paradise," said Anastasia.

In the tranquil moods of matrimony, how is it that one shrinks so from sentiment? On the Barbary Coasts of Love we excel in it. In books, on the stage, we revel in it; but when it comes to the hallowed humdrum of the home it suits us better to be curtly commonplace. This is so hard for the Latin races to understand. They are so emotional, so unconscious in their affection. Doubtless Anastasia put down my reserve to coldness, but I could not help it.

"Look here, Little Thing," I said, as we walked home, "you mustn't work any more. Let's go to the country for a week or two. Let's go to Fontainebleau."

"How we get money?"

"We'll use that extra hundred francs."

"Yes, but when that is spend?"

"Oh, don't worry. Something will turn up. Let's go."

"If you like it. I shall love it, the rest, the good air. Just one week."

"And let's take the Môme with us. Frosine will let her go. It will be such a treat for her. Perhaps, too, Helstern will spare a few days and join us."

"Ah, it will all be so nice."

So next day I bundled up *Tom Dick and Harry*, and under the name of Silenus Starset, I sent it off to the publishers of my other novels.

"I've been thinking, Little Thing," I said, "that when we come back we'd better give up the apartment and take a room. We can save over twenty francs a month like that. It won't be for long.

When the novel's accepted, there will be an end of our troubles."

"Just as you like it. I've been very happy."

Helstern promised to meet us in the forest; so that afternoon with the Môme and a hundred francs we took the train to Barbizon. If we had not both been avid for it, that holiday would have been worth while only to see the rapture of the Môme. It was her first sight of the real country, and she was delirious with delight. Anastasia had a busy time answering her questions, trying to check her excitement, gently restraining her jerking arms and legs. Her eyes shone, her tongue rattled, her head pivoted eagerly, and many on the train watched her with amusement.

As we rolled through the country of Millet, the westering sun slanted across the level fields, catching the edges of the furrows, and launching long shadows across the orchards. We took rooms in a cottage in Barbizon. From the sun-baked street a step, and we were in the thick of the forest, drowned in leafy twilight and pine-scented solitude. And with every turn, under that canopy of laughing leaves, the way grew wilder and more luring. The molten sunshine dripped through branches, flooding with gold the ferny hollows, dappling with amber the russet pathway. Down through the cool green aisles it led in twilights of translucent green, mid pillaring oak and yielding carpets of fine-powdered cones. And ever the rocks grew more grotesque, taking the shapes of griffins and primordial beasts, all mottled with that splendid moss of crimson, green, and gold. Then it grew on one that wood nymphs were about, that fawns were peeping from the lightning-splintered oaks, and that the spell of the forest was folding one around.

On the second day Helstern joined us. He was gloomily enthusiastic, pointing out to me beauties of form and colour I would have idly passed. He made me really feel ashamed of my crassness.

What a gifted, acute chap! But, oh, how atrabilious!

"For Heaven's sake, old man," I said one day, "don't be so pessimistic."

"How can a man be other than pessimistic," he answered, "with a foot like mine. Just think what it means. Look here."

Rolling up his sleeve, he showed me an arm a sculptor—might have raved over.

"If I'd been all right, what an athlete I'd have made. Look at my torso, my other leg. And my whole heart is for action, for energy, for deeds. Just think how much that makes life worth while is barred to me. And I shrink from society, especially where there are women. I'm always thinking they pity me. Oh, that's gall and wormwood—to be pitied! I should have a wife, children, a home, yet here I am a lonely, brooding misanthrope; and I'm only forty-six."

Yet he cheered up when the Môme was near. The two were the greatest of friends now, and it was a notable sight to see the big man with his Forbes Robertson type of face and his iron-grey mane, leading by the hand the little girl of five with the slender limbs, the pansy-blue eyes, and the honey-yellow hair.

And what exciting tales the Môme would have to tell on her return: how they had surprised a deer nibbling at the short grass; how a wild boar with tushes gleaming had glared at them out of the brake; how an eagle had arisen from a lonely gorge! Then there were lizards crawling on the silver-grey rocks, and the ceaseless calling of cuckoos, and scolding squirrels, and drumming woodpeckers. Oh, that was the happy child! Yet sometimes I wondered if the man was not as happy in his own way.

He was a queer chap, was Helstern. I remember one time we all sat together on a fallen log, and the sky seen through the black bars of the pines was

like a fire of glowing coals. Long, serene and mellow the evening lengthened to a close.

"You know," said the sculptor, as he pulled steadily at the Turk's head pipe, and regarded the Môme thoughtfully, "I believe that all children should be reared and educated by the State. Then there would be no unfair handicapping of the poor: each child would find its proper place in the world."

"You would destroy the institution of the home?"

"I would destroy the instituton of millions of unworthy homes, stupid homes, needy homes, bigoted homes, sordid homes. I would replace them with one great glorious Home, run by a beneficent State, where from the very cradle children would be developed and trained on scientific principles, where they would be taught that the noblest effort of man is the service of man; the most ignoble, the seeking of money. I would teach them to live for the spiritual, not the sensual benefits of life. The private home does not teach these things. Its influence is pernicious. How many men can look back on their homes and not declare them bungling makeshifts, either stupidly narrow, or actually unhappy?"

"You would destroy the love ties of parent and child?"

"Not at all. I would strengthen them. As it is, how many children are educated away from their homes, in convents, boarding-schools, *Lycees*? Do they love their parents any the less? No; the more, for they do not see so much that is weak and contemptible in them. But if mothers wish, let them enter the State nurseries and nurse their own little ones—not according to our bungling, ignorant methods, but according to the methods of science. Then the youngsters would not be exposed to the anxieties that darken the average home; they would not pick up and perpetuate the vulgarities of their parents. The child of the pauper would be just as refined as the child of the peer. Think what

that would mean; a breaking down of all class distinction. The word 'gentleman' would come into its true significance, and in a few years we would have a new race, with new ideals, new ambitions, new ways of thought."

"You would educate them, too?"

"They would have all the education they wanted, but not in the present way. They would be taught to examine, to reason: not to accept blindly the beliefs of their fathers; to sift, to analyse: not to let themselves be crammed with ready-made ideas; I would not try to turn them all out in one mould as the pedagogues do; I would try to develop their originality. Scepticism and challenge would be their attitude. I would establish 'Chairs of Unbelief.' I would teach them that the circle is not round, and that two and two do not make four. Up the great stairway of Truth would I lead them, so that standing on its highest point they might hew still higher steps in the rock of knowledge."

"And how would you pay for this national nursery nonsense?"

"By making money uninheritable. Believe me, the hope of the future, the triumph of democracy the very salvation of the race lies in the State education of the children. The greatest enemies of the young are the old. Instead of the child honouring the parents, the parents should honour the child; for if there's any virtue in evolution the son ought to be an improvement on the father."

In the growing darkness I could see the bowl of his pipe glow and fade. I was not paying much attention to what he was saying, but there in that scented pine-gloom it was a pleasure to listen to that rich, vibrating voice.

"I want to be fair, I want to be just, I want to see every man do his share of the world's work. Let him earn as much money as he likes, but at his death let it revert to the State for the general

education of the race, not to pamper and spoil his own particular progeny. Let the girls be taught the glory of motherhood, and the men military duty ; then, fully equipped for the struggle, let all go forth. How simple it is ! How sane ! Yet we're blind, so blind."

" Solonge is sleeping in my arms," said Anastasia. " I sink it is time we must go home."

CHAPTER X

THE LIFE AND DEATH OF DOROTHY MADDEN

THE time was drawing near when I would become a father. Yet as the hour of my trial approached I realised that I was glad, glad. I hoped it would be a girl ; nay, I was sure it would be a girl ; a little, dark, old-fashioned girl, whose hand I would hold on my rambles, and whose innocent mind I would watch unfolding like a flower. And I would call her . . . yes, I would call her Dorothy.

Dorothy ! How sweet the name sounded ! But no sweeter than my little daughter—of that I was sure. I could feel her hand, small as a rose leaf, nestling in mine ; see her innocent, tan-brown eyes gazing upward into my face. Then as she ran and eagerly plucked a vagrant blossom I would weave about it some charming legend. I would people the glade with fairies for her, and the rocks with gnomes. In her I would live over again my own wonderful childhood. She, too, would be a dreamer, sharing that wonderful kingdom of mine, understanding me as no other had ever done.

Then when she grew up, what a wonderful woman she would be ! How proud she would be of me ! How, in old age, when my hair grew white, and my footsteps faltered, she would take my arm, and together we would walk round the old garden in the hush of eventide.

" Wonderful destiny ! " I cried, inspired by the sentimental pictures unfolding themselves before me. " I can see myself older yet, an octogenarian. My back is bent, my hair is snowy white. I have a venerable beard and kindly eyes that shine through gold-rimmed spectacles. A tartan shawl is round

my shoulders, and my hands, as they rest on my silver-headed cane are glazed and crinkly. But, crowning glory! Greater than that array of children of my mind for which men give me honour, are the children of my flesh who play around my knee, my grandchildren. There will be such a merry swarm of them, and in their joyous laughter I will grow young again. Oh, blessed destiny! To be a father is much; but to be a grandfather so infinitely nobler—and less trouble."

The more I thought over it, the more I became impressed. My imminent paternity became almost an obsession with me. My marriage had surprised me. No time had I to embroider it with the flowers of fancy, but this was different. So engrossed did I become with a sense of my own importance that you would have thought no one had ever become a father before. In my enthusiasm, I told Lorrimer of my interesting condition, but the faun-like young man rather damped my ardour.

"Marriage," he observed, with his brilliant, mocking smile, "is a lottery, in which the prizes are white elephants. But Fatherhood, that's the sorriest of gambles. True, as you suggest, your daughter may marry the President of the United States, but on the other hand she may turn out to be another Brinvilliers. She may be a Madame de Stael and she may be a Pompadour. Then again, you may have a family of a dozen."

"But I won't," I protested indignantly.

"Well, just suppose. You may have a dozen ordinary respectable tax-payers and one rotter. Don't you think the black sheep will discount all your successful efforts? Really, old man, you're taking an awful chance. Then after all, it's an ungrateful business. The girls get married and enter the families of their husbands; the boys either settle far away, or get wives you don't approve of.

Anyway, you lose them. At the worst you beget a criminal, at the best an ingrate. It's a poor business. However, cheer up, old man : we'll hope for the best."

Helstern, on the other hand, took a different view of it. The sculptor was sombrely enthusiastic.

" You must let me do a group of it, Madden. I'll call it the First-born. I'm sure I could take a gold medal with it."

He led me to a café, and in his tragic tones ordered beer in which we drank to the health of the First-born.

" Just think of it," he rolled magnificently, his visionary instincts aroused. " Just think of that little human soul waiting to be born, and it's you that give it the chance to enter this world. O happy man ! Just think of all the others, the countless hosts of the unborn waiting their turn. Why, it's an inspiring sight, these wistful legions, countless as the sands of the sea. And it's for us to welcome them, to be the means of opening the door to as many as possible, to give them beautiful bodies to enter into, and to make the world more pleasant for them to dwell in. Now, there's a glorious ambition for us all. Let parenthood be the crowning honour of life. Let it be the glory of every woman to have children—whether she have a husband or no. Let no woman be denied the joys of motherhood just because there are not men enough to go round."

He drank deeply from his big stein, and wiped some foam from his lips.

" Why, it's more than an ambition : it's a religion. The Japanese worship the Dead ; let us worship the Unborn, the great races who are to come, the people we are going to help to make great. For on us it all depends, on us to-day. Every action of ours is like a pebble thrown in a still sea, the waves of which go rippling down eternity. Yes,

let us realise our responsibility to the Unborn, and govern our lives accordingly in grace and goodliness. There ! that goes to the very heart of all morality—to live our best, not because we are expecting to be rewarded, but because we are making for generations to come better bodies, better homes, better lives. And they in their turn will realise their duty to the others that are crowding on, and make the world still worthier for their occupation."

He filled his Turk's-head pipe thoughtfully.

"I want to go further," he went on, "but the rest is more fanciful. I believe that the armies of the Unborn know that it all depends on us here to-day what kind of deal they are going to get, and in their vast, blind way they are trying to influence us. I like to think that that is the great impulse towards good we all feel, the power that in spite of selfishness is gradually lifting us onward and upward. It is the multitude to come, trying in their blind, pitiful way to influence us, to make us better. There they wait, the soldiers of the future, ready to take up the great fight, to carry the banner of freedom, happiness, and mutual love to the golden goal of universal brotherhood. Truly I worship the Unborn."

He lit his pipe solemnly.

Then: "Let me congratulate you, Madden. You are a very lucky man."

Much cheered I thanked him and, absorbed in my dreams of paternity, continued to tramp the streets. All the time I was seeing that slim little girl of mine, with her long dark hair, her hazel eyes, her quaint, old-fashioned ways. And as the day drew near she grew more and more real to me. I could feel her caressing arms around my neck, and her rosebud mouth pressed to mine. Truly she was the most adorable child that ever lived.

One piece of luck we had at this period: The fairy stories were accepted by the *Piccadilly Magazine*

and we got ten pounds for them, thus saving the situation once again.

When the time came that we should obtain a new lodging I had taken a room in the rue D'Assas, but I was immediately sorry, for I discovered that it overlooked the Maternity Hospital Tarnier. The very first morning I saw a young woman coming out with a new baby. She was a mere girl, hatless and all alone, and she cried very bitterly.

Then that night, as I was preparing to ascend the stairs, I heard terrible shrieks coming from the great, gloomy building as if some woman within were being painfully murdered. For a moment I paused, stricken with horror. There was a cab drawn up close by, and the *cocher* was pacing beside it. He was the typical Parisian cab-driver, corpulent and rubicund, the product of open air, no brain worry, and generous living. He indicated the direction of the appalling cries: "The world's not coming to an end just yet," he observed with a great rosy grin.

Nor was the view from our window conducive of more cheerful thoughts. I could look right down into one of the wards, a great, barn-like place, mathematically monotonous, paintully clean. There were the white enamelled beds, each with its face of pain on the pillow, its tumbled bedding, agony-twisted or still in apathy. Then in the night I suddenly started, for once again I heard those awful sounds. They began as long, half-stifled moans . . . then screams, each piercing, sharp-edged with agony, holding a strange note of terror . . . then shriek upon shriek till the ultimate expression of human agony seemed to be reached . . . then sudden silence.

At least twice during the night this would happen, and often in the morning there would be a dismal little funeral cortège standing outside the gates; a man dabbing red eyes with a handkerchief would

herd some blubbering children into a carriage, and drive after a hearse in which lay a coffin. It was all very melancholy, and preyed on my spirits. I wondered how people could live here always; but no doubt they got hardened. No doubt this was why we got our room so cheaply.

Then at last the day came when Little Thing held me very tightly, gave me a long, hard kiss and left me, to pass through that portal of pain. Back I went to the room again. How empty it seemed now! I was miserable beyond all words. I had dinner at the Lilas, and for two hours sat moodily brooding over my coffee. What amazed me was that other men could go through this trial time after time and take it with such calmness. The long-haired poets, the *garçons* with their tight, white aprons—were they fathers too? A girl came and sat by me, a girl with high cheek-bones, snake-like eyes, and a mouth like a red scar. I rose with dignity, sought my room and my bed.

There I fell into a troubled doze in which I dreamed of Dorothy. She had grown up and had made her *début* as an operatic star with overwhelming success. How proud I was of her! Then suddenly as I gazed, she changed to the young woman of the café, who had looked at me so meaningly. I awoke with a crushing sense of distress.

Hark! Was that a scream? It seemed to cleave my very heart. But then it might be someone else. There was no distinguishing quality in these screams. Trull or princess they were all alike, just plain mothers crying in their agony. No, I could not tell . . . but it was too terrible. I dressed hurriedly and went out into the streets.

At three in the morning Paris is a city of weird fascination. It turns to us a new side—sinister, dark, mysterious. Even as the rats gather in its gutters, so do the human rats take possession of its pavements. Everyone you meet seems on evil bent,

and in the dim half-light you speculate on their pursuits. Here come two sauntering demireps with complexions of vivid certainty; there a rake-hell reels homeward from the night dens of Montmartre; now it is a wretched gatherer of cigarette stubs, peering hawk-eyed as he shambles along; then two dark, sallow youths, with narrow faces, glinting eyes, and unlit cigarettes in their cynical mouths; the sinister apache.

Coming up the Boul' Mich' was a stream of tumbrels from the Halles, and following their trail I came on a scene bewildering in its movement and clamour. The carts that had been arriving since the previous night had gorged the ten pavilions that form the great Paris Market, till they overflowed far into the outlying streets. The pavements were blocked with heaps of cabbages and cauliflowers, carrots and turnips, celery and asparagus, while a dozen different kinds of salad gleamed under the arc lights with a strange unnatural viridity. In other parts of the market crates of chickens and rabbits were being dumped on the pavements; fresh fish from the coast were being unloaded in dripping, salty boxes; and a regiment of butchers in white smocks were staggering under enough sides of beef to feed an army.

What an orgy of colour it was! You might pass from the corals and ivorys of the vegetable market to the fierce crimsons of the meat pavilion; from the silver greys of the section devoted to fish, to the golden yellows of the hall dedicated to butter and cheese. There were a dozen shades of green alone —from the light, glossy green of the lettuce to the dull green of the cress; a dozen shades of red— from the pale pink of the radish to the dark crimson of the beet.

Through this tumult of confusion I pushed my way. Hurrying porters in red nightcaps, with great racks of osier strapped on their backs, rushed to

and fro, panting, and dripping with sweat. Strapping red-faced women with the manner of men ordered them about. A self-reliant race, these women of the Halles, accustomed to hold their own in the fierce struggle of competition, to eat and drink enormously, to be exposed to the weather in all seasons. Their voices are raucous, their eyes sharp, their substantial frames swathed in many layers of clothes. Their world is the market; they were born in its atmosphere, they will die with its clamour in their ears.

And from the surrounding slums what a sea of misery seemed to wash up! At this time you may see human flotsam that is elsewhen invisible. In the bustling confusion of the dawn the human rats slink out of their holes to gain a few sous; not much—just four sous for soup and bread, four sous for a corner in the dosshouse, and a few sous for cognac. Here flourish all the *metiers* of misery. I saw five old women whose combined ages must have made up four hundred years, huddled together for warmth, and all sunk in twitching, shuddering sleep. I saw outcast men with livid faces and rat-chewed beards, whose clothes rotted on their ricketty frames. I saw others dazed from a debauch, goggle-eyed, blue-lipped pictures of wretchedness. And the drinking dens in the narrow streets vomited forth more wanton women and malevolent men, till it seemed to me that never does misery seem so pitiable, never vice so repulsive, as when it swirls round those teeming pavilions at four o'clock of a raw, rainy morning.

Suddenly I stopped to look at a female of unusual height and robust rotundity. A woman merchant of the markets, seemingly of substance no less than of flesh. Her voice was deep and hoarse, her eyes hard and grim, and the firmness of her mouth was accentuated by a deliberate moustache. A masculine woman. A truculent, overbearing woman.

A very virago of a woman. Her complexion was of such a hard redness, her Roman nose so belligerent. On her bosom, which outstood like the seat of a fauteuil, reposed a heavy gold chain and locket. On her great, red wrists were bracelets of gold ; and on her hands, which looked as if they could deliver a sledge-hammer blow, sparkled many rings. Beside this magnificent termagant her perspiring porters looked pusillanimous. "Here," thought I, "is the very Queen of the Halles."

She was enthroned amid a pile of wicker crates containing large grey shells. As I looked closer I saw that the grey shells contained grey snails, and that those on the top of the heap were peering forth and shooting out tentative grey horns. Some of them were even crawling up the basket work. Then as I watched them curiously a label on the crate caught my eye and I read :

MADAME SERAPHINE GUINOVAL
Marchande d' Escargots
Les Halles, Paris

"Guinoval," I thought : "that's odd. Surely I've heard that name before. Why, it's the maiden name of Anastasia. The name of this enormous woman, then, is Guinoval. Sudden idea ! Might it not be that there is some relationship between them ?" But the contrast between my slight, shrinking Anastasia with her childlike face and this dragoon of a woman was so great that I dismissed the idea as absurd.

I was very tired when I reached home. I had been afoot four hours, and dropping on my bed I fell asleep. About eleven o'clock I awoke with a vague sense of fear. Something had happened, I felt. Hurrying down, I entered the hospital.

Yes, they told me ; my wife had been confined

during the night. She was very weak, but doing well.

"And the child," I asked, trying to conceal my eagerness. "Was it a boy or a girl?"

"The child, monsieur, was a girl" (how my heart leapt); "but unfortunately it—had not lived."

"Dead!" I stammered; then after a stunned moment:

"Can I see her? Can I see my child?"

So they took me to something that lay swathed in linen. I started with a curious emotion of pain. That! so grotesque, so pitiful—that, the gracious girl who was going to be so much to me, the sweet companion who was going to understand me as no one else could, the precious comfort of my declining years! Oh, the bitter mockery of it!

And so next day, alone in a single cab I took to the cemetery all that was mortal of Dorothy Madden.

End of Book II

BOOK III—THE AWAKENING

CHAPTER I

THE STRESS OF THE STRUGGLE

"Look here, Madden, you really ought to try and shake off your melancholy," said Helstern, as we sat in front of the Café Soufflet.

"To hear you call me melancholy," I retorted, "is like hearing the pot call the kettle black. And anyway you've never lost an only child."

"I believe you're a little mad," said the sculptor observing me closely.

"Are we not all of us just a little mad? Would you have us entirely sane? What a humdrum world that would be! I hate people who are so egregiously sane."

"But you're letting this idea of yours altogether obsess you. You've created an imaginary child, just as you might have created one in fiction, only ten times more vividly. Then when the earthly frame into which it was to pass proves too frail to hold it you refuse to let it die. You keep on thinking: 'My daughter! my daughter!' And spiritually you reach out to a being that only exists in your imagination."

"She doesn't, Helstern; that's where you're wrong. I thought so at first, but now I know. She really exists, exists in that wonderful world we can only dimly conjecture. She sought for admission to this our world and it was denied her; but she lives in the spirit. She will grow up in the spirit; and, even as if she were a child of the flesh, I who loved her so well have her always."

"Rubbish! Look here, I see what's the matter

with you. You've got the fictionists' imagination. This is only a creature of your brain. Kill it, as Dickens killed little Dombey, as the female novelists kill their little Willies and little Evas. Kill it."

"Man, would you make a parricide of me? Murder is not done with hands alone. I loved this child as never in my life have I loved any one. It's strange—I don't believe I ever did really love any one before. I've had an immense affection for people; but for Dorothy I would have died."

"You make me tired, man. She's not real."

"She is—to me; and supposing for a moment that she isn't, is it not the case that we can never care for real persons with their faults and follies as we can for our idealised abstractions? We never really love any one till we've lost them. But as you say, I must rouse myself."

"Why, of course. Granted that she really exists in the spirit, let her presence be a sweetness and an inspiration to you, not a gnawing sorrow. Buck up!"

"You're right. I must get to my writing at once. After all I have my wife to think of. She loves me."

"She surely does, devotedly. You have a treasure in her, and you don't realise it."

"I suppose not. My work takes so much of the power of feeling out of me. My emotional life is sacrificed to it. The world I create is more real to me than the world about me. I don't think the creative artist should marry. He only makes an apology for a husband."

"Well, I think a man with the artistic temperament ought to marry a woman who can look after him from the material side. She should be a buffer between him and the world, always willing to keep in the background and never be a constraint on him. A real genius, on the other hand, ought never to marry. He's altogether too impossible a

person. But then, Madden, you know you're not a genius."

He said this so oddly that I burst out laughing, and with that I felt my grey mood lifting.

"By the way," said Helstern, just as we were parting, "I don't like to mention it, but what with hospital expenses and so on you've been having a pretty hard time of it lately. I've just had my quarterly allowance—more money than I know what to do with. If a hundred francs would be of any use to you I'll never miss it."

I was going to refuse; but the thought that the offer was made in such a generous spirit made me hesitate; and the further thought that at the moment all the money I had was ten francs, made me accept. So Helstern handed me a pinkish bank-note.

"I don't know how to thank you," I said. "But don't be afraid, I'll pay you back one of these days. You know I've got a novel knocking around the publishers. When it gets accepted I'll be on velvet. In the meantime this will help to keep the pot a-boiling. That reminds me I must find a new place to hole up in. Do you know of any vacant rooms in your quarter?"

"In the famous Quartier Mouffetard? Come with me and we'll have a look."

The result was that for a rent of twenty francs a month I found myself the tenant of a spacious garret in the rue Gracieuse. So, feeling well pleased, I returned to the room in the rue D'Assas to gather together our few effects. I was so engaged when a knock came to the door and the little Breton *bonne* appeared.

"A lady to see Monsieur."

I rose from the heap of soiled linen I was trying to compress into as small bulk as possible.

"Show her in," I said with some surprise.

Then there entered one whom I had almost forgotten—Lucretia.

My first thought was: "Thank God! my wife isn't here!" My second: "How can I get rid of her?" It is true I have always tried to make life more like fiction, to drench it with romance, to cultivate it in purple patches. Here, then, was a dramatic situation I might have used in one of my novels; here was a sentimental scene I might develop most artistically; and now my whole panting, perspiring anxiety was not to develop it. "Confound it!" I thought, "this should never have happened. Why can't fiction stay where it belongs?"

Lurcetia was dressed with some exaggeration. Her split skirt showed a wedge of purple stocking almost to the knee. Her blouse, too, was of purple, a colour that sets my teeth on edge. She wore a mantle of prune colour, and a toque of crushed strawberry velvet with an imitation aigrette. The gilt heels of her shoes were so high that she was obliged to walk in the mincing manner of the mannequin. If ever I had suspected her of violent virtue I would have exonerated her on the spot.

She offered me a languid hand and subsided unasked on the sofa. Her lips were Cupid's bows of vermillion, and her complexion was a work of art. She regarded me with some defiance; then she spoke in excellent French.

"Well, *mon ami*, I have come. You thought to leave me there in Napoli, but I have followed you. Now, what are you going to do about it?"

"Do!" I said, astounded. "Why, you have no claim on me!"

"I have no claim on you. *You* say that—you who have stolen my heart, you who have made me suffer. You cannot deny that you have run away from me."

"I don't deny it. I did run away from you; but it was to save you, to save us both. I have done you no wrong."

"Ah! that was the worst of all; that was the

most cruel—that you did me no wrong. To wrong me was perhaps to do me an injury; but not to wrong me—that was to insult me."

"But, good Heavens!" I cried, half distracted, "I thought I acted for the best."

"I love you still," she went on; "I have traced you here; I am friendless, alone, in this great and cruel city. What must I do?"

As she said these words, Lucretia, after seeing that she possessed a handkerchief, applied it to her eyes so as not to disturb their cosmetic environment, and wept carefully. There was no doubting the genuineness of her grief. I was touched. After all had I not roused a romantic passion in this poor girl's heart? Was she not the victim of my fatal charms? My heart ached for her. I would have sat down on the sofa by her side and tried to comfort her, but prudence forbade.

"I'm sorry," I said, "but how can I help you? I have no money, and my wife is in the hospital."

"Your wife!"

"Yes; I'm married."

"Not one of those girls I saw you with in the café that night?"

"Yes; the small one."

"A—h." She prolonged the exclamation. Then she delicately dried her eyes. "That is different. What if I tell your wife how you treated me?"

"But I've done you no harm."

"Would she believe that, do you think?"

"Hum! no! I don't think she would. But what good would it do? You would only cause suffering and estrangement, and you would gain nothing. I told you I had no money to give you."

Looking around the shabby room she saw the soiled linen I was trying to do into a newspaper parcel. This evidently convinced her I was speaking the truth.

"Bah!" she said, "why do you insult me with

offers of money? If you offered me ten thousand francs at this moment I would refuse them. What I want is help, sympathy."

"Oh! If it's sympathy you want," I said eagerly, "I'm there. I've gallons of it on tap. But help—what can I do?"

"You have friends you can introduce me to. Can you not find me work of some kind? Anything at all that will bring me an honest living. Remember I am only a poor, weak woman, and I love you."

Here she showed signs of weeping again.

"Well," I said, touched once more, "I don't know. The men I know are all artists." Then an idea shot through me like a bullet. To cure a woman who is infatuated with you, introduce her to some man who is more fascinating than yourself. But to whom could I transfer this embarrassing affection? Helstern? He was out of the question. Lorrimer? Ah, there was the man. Handsome, debonnair Lorrimer; Lorrimer who prided himself on being such a Lothario; whom I had heard say: "Why should I wrong the sex whose privilege it is to love me by permitting any one member to monopolise me?" Yes, Lorrimer should be the lucky one. So I said:

"Let me see; you would not care to pose for the artists, would you?"

"Ah, yes, I think that would suit me very well indeed."

"Well, then, I'll give you the address of an artist friend. He's poor, but he knows everyone. Perhaps he can help you. At least there will be no harm in trying."

So I gave her Lorrimer's address, and she seemed more than grateful.

"Thank you very much. Shall I see you again soon?"

"Perhaps; but remember, not a word of Napoli."

"No; trust me. I am very discreet. Well, *au revoir.*"

With that she took her departure, and once more I felt that I had emerged successfully from a dangerous situation.

Next morning I hired a *voiture à bras*, and loading on it my few poor sticks of furniture I easily pulled the load to my new residence. Once there, it was surprising how soon I made the place homelike. Anastasia was coming out of the hospital the following day, and I was intensely eager that everything should be cheerful. Fortunately, the window admitted much sunlight, and the slope of the roof lent itself to quaint and snug effects of decoration. I really did wonders with drapings of cheap cotton, made a lounge and a cosy corner out of cushions, contrived a wardrobe (in view of an increase in our prosperity), and constructed two cunning cupboards within which all articles of mere utility were hid from sight.

Lorrimer dropped in and gave me a hand with the finishing touches. He also loaned me three lifesize paintings in oil to adorn my walls. They were studies for the forthcoming Salon picture that was to mark a crisis in his career, and showed Rougette in different poses of the nude. I did not think it worth while to say anything about Lucretia just then.

Helstern, too, came to see how things were progressing and contributed two clay figures, also of the nude; so that by the time everything was finished my garret had become quite a startling repository of feminine loveliness unadorned. The following morning I bought several bunches of flowers from a barrow, at two sous a bunch, and arranged them about the room. Then my two friends insisted on bringing up a supply of food and preparing lunch.

So I went off to the hospital to fetch Anastasia. I felt as excited as a child, and for the moment very happy. I had been to see her for a few moments

every day, when she would hold my hand and sometimes carry it to her lips. She was of a deathly whiteness and more like a child than ever. As she came out leaning on my arm I saw another of those sobbing girls leaving the hospital with her baby.

"What an irony!" I said. "There's a girl would give anything not to have that infant. It's a reproach and a disgrace to her. It will only drag her down, prevent her making a living. It will be brought up in misery. And we who wanted one so much, and would have made it so happy, must go away empty-handed."

"Yes," she answered, with a sob in her throat; "The doctaire tell me nevaire must I have anuzzer. He tell me it will keel me. And I want so much—oh, I want leetle child!"

Hailing a cab, we were soon at our new home. She did not seem to take much interest; yet, when she heard the sounds of welcome from within, she brightened up. Then when the door was thrown open she gave a little gasp of pleasure.

"Oh, I'm glad, I'm glad."

For Lorrimer had painted a banner, *Welcome Home*, above the fireplace; the sunshine flooded in; the flowers were everywhere, and a wondrous lunch was spread on the table. Then suddenly the two artists, standing on either side of the doorway, put mirlitons to their mouths and burst into the Marseillaise. They wrung her hand, and even (with my permission) saluted her on both cheeks; and she was so rarely glad to see them that her eyes shone with tears. So after all her home-coming was far from a sad one.

And after lunch and the good bottle of Pommard that Helstern had provided we discussed plans and prospects with the hope and enthusiasm of beginners; while she listened, but more housewife-like took stock of her new home and its practical possibilities.

Next day I began work again. My idea was to

completely ignore my own ideals and turn out stuff according to magazine formula. I had made an analysis of some thirty magazine stories; it only remained to mix them according to recipe and serve hot. I continued to hire the rheumatic typewriter, and composed straight on to the machine, so that I accomplished at least one story a day.

Once more Anastasia took charge of the forwarding, but she seemed to have less enthusiasm now. It was as if her severe illness had taken something out of her. All the money I had been able to give her was seventy francs, and this was not very heartening. She got out her *métier* again; but she would often pause in her work as if her back pained her, and rub her eyes as if they too ached. Then with stubborn patience she would resume her toil.

One morning the manuscript of *Tom, Dick and Harry* was returned from the publisher, with a note to say that "at that time when the taste of the public was all for realistic fiction works of fancy stood little chance of success without a well-known name on the cover. As the policy of the firm was conservative they were obliged to return it."

How I laughed over this letter. How bitterly, I thought, they would be chagrined when they found out who the unknown Silenus Starset was. I was even maliciously glad, and, chuckling, sent off the manuscript on another voyage of adventure.

I fairly bombarded the magazines with short stories. There was not one of any standing that was not holding a manuscript of mine. And such manuscripts, some of them! I was amazed at my cheek in offering them. I would select one of my twelve stock plots, alter the setting, give it a dexterous twist or two, and shoot it off. My mark was a minimum of a manuscript a day, and grimly I stuck to it.

For three weeks I kept pounding away on my clacking typewriter. It was costing us a small

income in stamps, and economy of the most rigid kind had to be practised in other ways. We gave up eating ordinary meat and took to patronising the *Boucherie Chevaline*. I came to appreciate a choice mule steak, and considered an *entrecôte* of ass a special delicacy. We made salads of *poiret*, which is called the poor man's asparagus. We drank *vin ordinaire* at eight sous a litre and our bread was of the coarsest. Down there in the rue Mouffetard it was no trouble to purchase with economy, for everything was sold from that standpoint.

I think the rue Mouffetard deserves a special page of description, because it contains the elements of all Paris slumdom. From the steep and ancient rue St. Geneviève de Montagne branches the dismal rue Descartes. It runs between tall, dreary houses, growing gradually more sordid ; then suddenly, as if ashamed of itself, it changes its name to the rue Mouffetard and continues its infamous way.

The street narrows to the width of a lane and the houses that flank it grow colder, blacker, more decrepit. The pavement on either side is a mere ribband and the cobbled way is overrun with the ratlike humanity spewed forth from the sinister houses. The sharp gables and raking roofs, out of which windows like gaping sores make jagged openings, notch themselves grotesquely against the sky. Their faces are gnawed by the teeth of time and grimy with the dust of ages. Their windows are like blind eyes, barred and repulsive. The doors that burrow into them are nothing but black holes, so narrow that two people passing have to turn sideways, so dark that it is like entering a charnel house.

Nearly every second shop is a *chope*, a *buvette*, a saloon. At one point there are four clustered together. Some of these drinking dens are so narrow they seem mere holes in the wall, scarcely any wider

than the width of their own door, and running back like dark cupboards. And in them, with their heads together and their elbows on the tiny tables you can see the ferret-faced Poilo, and Gigolette, his gosse, of the greasy and elaborate coiffure. Hollow-cheeked, glittering of eye, light as a cat, cunning, cynical, cruel, he smokes a cigarette; while she, brazen, claw-fingered, rapacious, sips from his Pernod.

At the butchers' only horse-meat is sold. A golden horse usually surmounts the door, overlooking a sign —*Boucherie Chevaline*, or sometimes *Boucherie Hyppagique*. The meat is very dark; the fat very yellow; and there are festoons of red sausages, very red and glossy. One shop bears the sign "House of Confidence." There are other signs, such as "Mule of premier quality," "Ass of first choice."

As you descend the street you get passing glimpses of inner courts of hideous squalor, of side streets, narrow and resigned to misery. Daring odours pollute the air, and the way is now packed with wretchedness. Grimy women, whose idea of a *coiffure* is to get their matted hair out of the way, trudge draggle-skirted by the side of husky-throated, undersized men whose beards bristle brutishly. Bands of younger men hang around the bars. They wear peaked caps and have woollen scarfs around their throats. They look at the well-dressed passer-by with furtive speculation. They live chiefly on the brazen girls who parade up and down, with their hair coiled over their ears, clawed down in front, sleek with brilliantine and studded with combs.

Then, as the narrow, tortuous street plunges down to the *carrefour* of the Gobelins it becomes violently commercial, a veritable market jammed with barrows, studded with stalls, strident with street cries of all kinds.

Here it is that Anastasia does her marketing.

It is wonderful how much she can bring home for a franc, sometimes enough to fill the net bag she carries on her arm. She never wears a hat on these expeditions ; it is safer without one.

Three weeks gone ; twenty stories written. I throw myself back in weariness and despair. It is hard work doing three thousand words a day, especially when one has to make a second copy for the clean manuscript. I began at eight in the morning and worked till ten at night. My face was thin, my cheeks pale, my eyes full of fag and stress. How I despised the work I was doing ! the shoddy, sentimental piffle, the anæmic twaddle, the pandering to the vulgar taste for stories of the upper circles. Ordinary folk not being sufficiently interesting for a snobbish public my heroes were seldom less than baronets. It got at last that every stroke of my typewriter jarred some sensitive nerve of pain in me —" Typewriter nerves " they call it. Then one night I gave up.

" I won't do another of these wretched things," I cried ; " I'm worked out. I feel as if my brain was mush, just so much sloppy stuff."

" You must take rest, darleen. You work too hard."

" Yes, rest in some far South Sea Island where I can forget that books and typewriters exist. I'm heartsick of the vampire trade. Well, I've reached my limit. To-morrow I'm just going out to the Luxembourg to loaf. Oh, that lovely word ! I'm going to sit and watch the children watching the Guignol, and laugh when they laugh. That's all I'm equal to—the Guignol."

And I did. Full of sweet, tired melancholy I sat listlessly under the trees, gazing at that patch of eager, intense, serious, uproarious, utterly enchanted faces, planted in front of the immortal Punch and Judy show. Oh, to have written that little drama ! Everything else could go. Oh, to play on the

emotions like an instrument, as it played on the emotions of these little ones! What an audience. How I envied them their fresh keen joy of appreciation! I felt so jaded, so utterly indifferent to all things. Yet I reflected to some extent their enthusiasm. I gaped with them, I laughed with them, I applauded with them.

Then with a suddenness that is overwhelming came the thought of my own little dream-child, she who in years to come should have taken her place in that hilarious band. After all, the November afternoon was full of sadness. The withered leaves were underfoot, and the vague despondency of the waning year hung heavily around me. Suddenly all joy seemed to go clean out of life, and slowly I returned to the wretched quarter in which I lived.

These were the sad days for us both, grey days of rain and boding. Early and late she would work at her embroidery, yet often look at me with a sigh. Then my manuscripts began to come back. Luckily, two were accepted, one by a society weekly, the other by a woman's journal. The latter was to be paid for on publication; but I wrote pleading necessity for the money and it was forthcoming. The two netted us three pounds ten, enough to pay the rent and tide us over for another month.

Once more *Tom, Dick and Harry* was returned, and once more gallantly dispatched. About this time I began to lose all confidence in myself. On one occasion I said to her:

"See, Little Thing, what a poor husband you have. He can't even support you."

"I have the best husband in the world. Courage, darleen. Everything will come yet very right I know."

"If only our child had lived," I said moodily, gazing at the sodden, sullen sky.

Sitting with her hands folded in her lap she did not answer. I saw that she drew back from her

beautiful embroidery so that a slow-falling tear would not stain it.

" You know," I went on, " I can't believe we've lost her. Seems to me she's with us. I let myself think of her too much. I can't help it. I loved her. God, how I loved her ! I never loved anyone else like that."

She looked at me piteously, but I did not see.

And next day, in a pouring rain, I walked to the cemetery and stood for an hour by an almost undistinguishable little grave. I got back, as they say, " wet as the soup," and contracted a severe chill. Anastasia made me stay in bed, and looked after me like a mother.

Yes, these were sad days ; and there were times when I felt moved to own defeat, to acknowledge success, to accept the fortune I had gained. Then I ground my teeth.

" No, I won't. I'm damned if I do. I'll play the game, and in spite of all I'll win."

CHAPTER II

THE DARKEST HOUR

THE past month has been the hardest we have yet experienced. After paying the rent we had about fifty francs to keep the house going. Not that it mattered much; for we both had such listless appetites and ate next to nothing. I refused to do any more pot-boiling work. For distraction I turned again to the study of the Quartier, to my browsings in its ancient by-ways. Amid these old streets that, like a knot of worms, cluster around the Patheon I managed to conjure up many a ghost of bygone Bohemia. As a result I began a series of three papers which I called *Demi-gods in the Dust.* They were devoted to the last sad days of De Musset, Verlaine and Wilde, those strong souls whose *liaisons* with the powers of evil plunged them to the utter depths.

The rue Gracieuse, where we reside, is probably one of the least gracious streets of Paris. Its lower end is grubbily respectable, its upper glaringly disreputable. It is in the latter we have our room. The houses are small, old, mean, dirty. There are four drinking dens, and the cobbles ring to the clang of wooden shoes. The most prominent building is a *hôtel meublé*, a low, leprous edifice with two windows real and four false. The effect of these dummy windows painted on the stone is oddly sinister. Underneath is a drinking den of unsavoury size, and opposite an old junk shop. At night the street is feebly lit by two gas lamps that sprout from the wall.

Luckily, our window faces the rue Monge. If it fronted on the rue Saint-Médard we should be unable

to live there, for the rue Saint-Médard, in spite of the apostolic nomenclature, is probably the most disgusting street in Paris.

It is old, three hundred years or more, and the houses that engloom it are black, corroded and decrepit. Its lower end is blocked by the aforesaid hostel of the blind windows, its upper is narrow and wry-necked where the Hôtel des Bons Garçons bulges into it. Between the two is a dim, verminous gulf of mildewed masonry. The timid, well-dressed person pauses on its threshold and turns back. For the police seldom trouble it, and the stranger passing through has a sense of being in some desperate cul-de-sac, and at the mercy of a villainous, outlawed population. They crawl to their doors to stare resentfully at the intruder, often call harshly after him, and sometimes stand right in the way, with an insolent, provocative leer. A glance round shows that other figures have cut off the retreat from behind, and for a moment one has a sense of being trapped. It is quite a relief to gain the comparative security of the rue Mouffetard.

But what gives the rue Saint-Médard its character of supreme loathsomeness is because it is the headquarters of the *chiffoniers*. These hereditary scavengers, midden-rakers, ordure-sifters, monopolise its disease-ridden ruins, living in their immemorial dirt. They are creatures of the night, yet one may sometimes see a few of them shambling forth to blink with bleary eyes at the sun, their hair long and matted, the dirt grained into their skins, their clothes corroded, their boots agape at the seams—very spawn of the ashpit.

And oh, the odour of the street! The mere memory makes me feel a nausea. It is the acrid odour of decay, of ageless, indomitable squalor. It assails you the moment you enter that gap of ramshackle ruins, pungent, penetrating, almost palpable. It is the choking odour of an ash-bin, an ash-bin

that is very old and is almost eaten away by its own putridity.

Then on a Sunday morning when the rue Mouffetard is such a carnival of sordid satisfactions the snakelike head of the rue Saint-Médard is devoted to the *marché pouilleux*. Here come the *chiffoniers* and spread out the treasures they have discovered during the week. Over a great array of his wares, all spread out on mildewed sheets of newspaper, stands an old *chiffonier* in a stove-pipe hat. He also wears a rusty frock coat, and with a cane points temptingly to his stock. His white beard and moustache are amber round the mouth with the stain of tobacco, and in a hoarse alcoholic voice he draws our attention, to a discarded corset, a pair of moth-eaten trousers, a frying-pan with a hole in it, an alarm clock minus the minute hand, a hair brush almost innocent of bristles—any of which we may have for a sou or two.

Such then is the monstrous rue Saint-Médard, and on a dark, wet November day, when its characteristic odour is more than usually audacious ; when the black, irregular houses, like rows of decayed teeth, seem to draw closer together ; when the mildewed walls steam loathfully ; when the jagged roofs are black against the sky and the sinister shadows crawl from the darkened doorways,—it is more like a horrible nightmare than a reality.

But the misery of others often makes us forget our own, and one day Helstern broke in on us looking grimmer than ever.

" Have you heard that our little Solonge is very ill ? "

" No. What's the matter ? "

" Typhoid. Her mother is nursing her. You might go down and see her, madam. It will be a comfort to her."

Anastasia straightened herself from the *métier* over which she was stooping.

"Yes, yes, I go at once. Oh, poor Frosine! Poor Solonge!"

As I gazed at her it suddenly struck me that she herself did not look much to brag about. But she put on her mantle and we followed Helstern to the rue Mazarin.

"It was like this," he told us; "I had an idea of a statue to be called *Bedtime*. It was to be a little Solonge, clad in her chemise and hugging a doll to her breast. So I went to see the mother and found the child had been sick for some days. I fetched the doctor; none too soon. We've got to pull the kid through."

We found the Môme lying in an apathetic way, her lovely hair streaming over the pillow, her face already hollow and strange-looking. She regarded us dully, but with no sign of recognition. Then she seemed to sleep, and her eyes, barely closed, showed the whites between the long lashes.

Frosine was calm and courageous, but her face was worn with long vigils, and her eyes, usually so cheerful, were now of a tragic seriousness. She turned to us eagerly.

"I can't get her roused, my little one. Not even for her mother will she smile. She just lies there as if she were tired. If she begins to sleep, she twitches and opens her eyes again. It was a week ago I first noticed she was ailing. She could scarcely hold up her arms as I went to dress her. So I put her to bed again, and ever since she's been sinking. She's all I've got in the world and I'm afraid I'm going to lose her. Willingly would I go in her place."

We arranged that Anastasia would remain there and take turns watching by the bedside of the Môme; then I returned to our garret alone.

It was more trying than ever now. Every day some of my manuscripts came back, and I had not the courage to send them out again. My novel, too, made its appearance one morning with the usual

letter of regret. More sensitive than other men, it says much for authors that they bear up so well under successive blows of fate. With me a rejection meant a state of bitter gloom for the rest of the day; and as nearly every day brought its rejection, cheerful intervals were few and far between.

To get the proper working stimulus I drank immense quantities of strong black coffee. In my desperate mood I think I would have taken hasheesh if necessary. It was the awful brain nausea that distressed me most, the sense of having so much to say and being unable to say it. I had moods of rage and misery, and sometimes I wondered if it was not through these that men entered into the domain of madness.

But after about six cups of coffee I would brighten miraculously. My brain would be a gleaming, exulting, conquering thing. I would feel the direct vision, the power of forth-right expression. Thrilling with joy, I would rush to my typewriter, and no power could drag me away from it. If Anastasia approached me at such a moment I would wave my arm frantically:

"Oh, please go away. Don't bother me."

Then, holding my head clutched in both hands, and glaring at the machine, I would try to catch up the broken thread of my ideas.

What an unsatisfactory life! Dull as ditchwater for days, then suddenly a change, a bewildering sense of fecundity, a brilliant certainty of expression. Lo! in an hour I had accomplished the work of a week. But such hours were becoming more and more rare with me, and more and more had I recourse to the deadly black coffee. And if the return of my stories hurt my pride, that of my novel was like a savage, stunning blow. I ground my teeth and (carefully observing that there was no fire in the grate) I hurled it dramatically to the flames. Then

Anastasia reverently picked it up, tenderly arranged it, and prepared it for another sally.

"This will be the last time," I would swear. "You can send it one time more; then—to hell with it."

And I would laugh bitterly as I thought of its far different fate if only I would sign it with the name I had a right to sign it with. What a difference a mere name made! Was it then that my work was only selling on account of my name? Was it then that in itself it had no merit? Was I really a poor incompetent devil who had succeeded by a fluke? "I must win," I cried in the emptiness of the garret. "My pride, my self-respect demand it. If I fail I swear I'll never write again."

There were times when I longed to go out and work with pick and shovel. Distressed with doubt I would gaze down at the dancing waters of the Seine and long to be one of those men steering the barges, a creature of healthy appetites with no thought beyond work, food and sleep. Oh, to get away on that merry, frolicsome water, somewhere far from this Paris, somewhere where trees were fluttering and fresh breezes blowing.

Ah! that was the grey Christmas. Everything the same as last—the booths, the toy-vendors, the holly and the mistletoe, the homeward-hurrying messengers of Santa Claus—everything the same, yet oh, how different! Where now was the singing of the heart, the thrilling to life's glory? Did I dream it all? Or was I dreaming now? As I toiled, toiled within myself, how like a dream was all that happened without! Yes, all of the last year seemed so unreal that if I had awakened in America and had found this Paris and all it had meant an elaborate creation of the magician Sleep, I would not have been greatly surprised. It has always been like that with me, the inner life real, the outer a dream.

I walked the crowded Boulevards again, but with no Little Thing by my side. Ah! here was the very

café where we sat a while and heard a woman sing a faded ballad. Poor Little Thing! She was not on my arm now. And, come to think of it, she too used to sing in those days, sing all the time. But not any more, never a single note.

At that moment she was watching by the bedside of the Môme, she who herself needed care and watching. She had been the good, good wife, yet I had never cared for her as I ought. I was always like that, longing for the things I had not, careless of what I had. Perhaps even if the child had lived I would have transferred my affections elsewhere. But I couldn't bear to think of that. No, my love for the child would have been an ideal that nothing could dim.

But if Christmas was grey, New Year's Day was black. Anastasia came back with bad news from the sick room. The Môme was gradually growing weaker. Helstern had brought her a golden-brown Teddy bear and had held it out to her, but she had looked at it with the heart-breaking indifference of one who had no more need to take an interest in such things. Her manner had that aloofness, that strange, wise calmness that makes the faces of dying children so much older, so much loftier than the faces of their elders. It is the pitying regard of those who are on the brink of freedom for us whom they leave in the prison of the flesh.

"Little Thing," I said one day, gazing grimly at the tobacco tin that acted as our treasury, "what are we to do? We've only one franc seventy-five left us, and the rent is due to-morrow."

She went over to her *métier* and held up the most beautiful piece of embroidery I had yet seen.

"Courage, darleen. The sun shine again very soon I sink. Now we can sell this. I am so glad. It seem zaire is so leetle I can do."

"No, no; I can't let you sell it. I don't want to part with any of your work. Let me take it

to the Mont-de-Piété. Then we can get it back some day."

"But zaire we only get half what we have if we sell it."

"Never mind. Perhaps it will be enough to tide us over for a day or two."

I realised thirty francs for the cushion cover, paid the rent, and was about seven francs to the good. "We can go on for another week anyway," I said.

During this black month I only saw Lorrimer once. It was on the Boul' Mich' and he was in a great hurry, but he stopped a moment.

"I say, Madden, was it you who sent me the Dago skirt? Where did you dig her up? She's a good type and makes a splendid foil to Rougette. I've changed my plans and begun a new Salon picture with both girls in it. Come up and see it soon. It's great. I'm sure the crisis in my fortune has come at last. Well, good-bye now. Thanks for sending me the model."

He was off before I could say a word; but in spite of the wondrous picture I did not go to his studio.

I had finished my *Demi-gods in the Dust* articles. As far as finish and force went I thought them the best work I had ever done. Now I began a series of genre stories of the Paris slums, called *Chronicles of the Café Pas Chemise.* I rarely went out. I worked all the time, or tried to work all the time. I might as well work, I thought, for I could not sleep. That worried me more than anything, my growing insomnia. For hours every night I would lie with nerves a-tingle, hearing the *noctambules* in the rue Monge, the thundering crash of the motor-buses, the shrill outcries from the boozing den below, the awakening of the *chiffoniers* in the rue Saint-Médard: all the thousand noises of nocturnal mystery, cruelty and crime. Then I would rise in the morning distracted and wretched, and not till I had disposed of

two big cups of coffee would I feel able to begin work again.

Then one morning I arose and we had no more money—well, just a few sous, enough to buy a crust or so for *déjeuner*. She took it as she went, on her way to the bedside of the dying Môme. She was a brave little soul, and usually made a valiant effort to cheer me, but this morning she could not conceal her dejection. She kissed me good-bye with tears coursing down her cheeks. Then I was alone. Never had the sky seemed so grey, so hopeless.

"I fear I'm beaten," I said. "I've made a hard fight and I've been found wanting. I am supposed to be a capable writing man. I'm a fraud. I can't earn my salt with my pen. The other was only an accident. It's a good thing to know oneself at one's true value. I might have gone on till the end of the chapter, lulled in my fatuous vanity. I'm humble now ; I'm crushed."

I sat there gazing at the dreary roofs.

"Well, I've had enough. Here's where I throw up the sponge. I'm going to spend the rest of my life planting cabbages in New Jersey. If it was only for myself I'd never give in. I've got just enough mule spirit to fight on till I'm hurt, but I can't let others get hurt too. Already I've gone too far. I've been a bit of a brute. But it's all over. I've lost, I've lost."

I threw myself back on my bed, unstrung, morbid, desperate. Then suddenly I sprang up, for there came a knocking at the door.

CHAPTER III

THE DAWN

It was the postman, not the usual bearer of rejected manuscripts ; another, older, more distinguished.

" Registered letter, monsieur."

Wonderingly I signed for it. The man lingered, but I had no offering for the great god *Pourboire.* I regarded the letter curiously. It was from MacWaddy & Wedge, the last people to whom I had sent *Tom, Dick and Harry.* All I knew of them was that they were a new firm who had adopted the advertising methods of the Yankees, to the horror of the old and crusted British publisher. In consequence they had done well, and were disposed to take risks where new writers were concerned.

Well, what was in the letter ? Like a man who stands before a closed door, which may open on Hell or Heaven, I hesitated. Then in fear and trembling I broke the seal. This is what I read :

> " Dear Sir,—We have perused with interest your novel, *Tom, Dick and Harry,* and are minded to include it in our Frivolous Fiction Library. As your work is entirely unknown, and we will find it necessary to do a great deal of advertising in connection with it, we are thus incurring a considerable financial risk. Nevertheless, we are prepared to offer you a five per cent. royalty on all sales ; or, if you prefer it, we will purchase the British and Colonial rights for one hundred pounds.
>
> " Yours very truly,
> " MacWaddy & Wedge.

"P.S.—Our Mr. Wedge is at present in Paris for a day or two, so if you call on him you might arrange details of publication. His address is the Hotel Cosmopolitan."

I sat staring at the letter. It had come at last, —success! One hundred pounds! Twenty-five hundred francs! Why, at the present rate of living it would keep us for two years; at the rate of the rue Mazarin, nearly twelve months. Never before had I realised that money meant so much. The prospect of living once more at the rate of two hundred and fifty francs a month intoxicated me. It meant chicken and champagne suppers; it meant evenings at the moving picture show; it even meant indulgence in a meerschaum pipe. Hurrah! How lovely everything would be again. As I executed a wild dance of delight I waved the letter triumphantly in the air. All the joy, the worth-whileness of life, surged back again. I wanted to rush away and tell Anastasia; then suddenly I sobered myself.

"I must contrive to see this Mr. Wedge at once. And I mustn't go looking like an understudy for a scarecrow. Happy thought—Helstern."

I found the sculptor in bed. "Hullo, old man!" I cried, "if you love me lend me a collar. I've got to interview a blooming publisher. Just sold a novel—a hundred quid."

"Congratulations," growled Helstern from the blankets. "Take anything you want. Light the gas when you go out, and put on my kettle."

So I selected a collar; then a black satin tie tempted me; then a waistcoat seemed to match it so well; then a coat seemed to match the waistcoat; then I thought I might as well make a complete job and take a pair of trousers and a long cape-coat. As Helstern is bulkier than I, the clothes fitted where they touched, but the ensemble was artistic enough.

"I'm off, oh sleepy one!" I called. "Be back in

two hours or so. Your water's nearly boiling. By the way, how did you leave the Môme ? "

" Better, thank Heaven. I do believe the kid's going to pull through. Last night she seemed to chirp up some. She actually deigned to notice her Teddy bear."

" Good. I'm so glad. You know, I believe the New Year's going to open up a new vein of happiness for us all."

" We need it. Well, come back and we'll drink to the healths of Publishers and Sinners."

It seemed my luck was holding, for I caught Mr. Wedge just as he was leaving the luxurious hotel. I gave my name and stated my business.

" Come in," said the publisher, leading the way to the gorgeous smoking-room. Mr. Wedge was a blonde, bland man, designed on a system of curves. He was the travelling partner, the entertainer, the upholder of the social end of the business. Immensely popular was Mr. Wedge. Mr. MacWaddy, I afterwards found, was equally the reverse. A meagre little man, spectacled and keen as a steel trap, he was so Scotch that it was said he did not dot his " i's " in order to save the ink. However, with MacWaddy's acumen and Wedge's urbanity, the combination was a happy one.

" Yes," said the latter affably, offering me a cigar with a gilt band, " we'll be glad to publish your book, Mr. Madden. By the way, no connection of Madden, the well-known American novelist ; writes under the name of Norman Dane ? "

" Ye-es—only a distant one."

" How interesting. Wish you could get him to throw something our way. We'd be awfully glad to show what we could do with his books. They're just the sort of thing we go in for—light, sensational, easy-to-read novels. He's a great writer, your cousin—I think you said your cousin ?—knows how to hit the public taste. His books may not be

literary, but they *sell;* and that's how we publishers judge books. Well, I hope you're going to follow in his footsteps. Seems to run in the family, the fiction gift. By the way, I'd better make out a contract form, and, while I think of it, I'll give you an advance. Twenty pounds do ? "

" You might make it forty, if it's all the same."

Mr. Wedge drew his cheque for that amount, and I signed a receipt.

" I'm just going round to the bank," he continued. " Come with me, and I'll get the cheque cashed for you."

So in ten minutes' time I said good-bye to him and was hurrying home with the money in my pocket. The sun was shining, the sky a dome of lapis lazuli, the Seine affable as ever. Once again it was the dear Paris I loved, the city of life and light. In a perfect effervescence of joy I bounded upstairs to the garret. Then quite suddenly and successfully I concealed my elation.

" Hullo, Little Thing ! " I sighed. " What have you got for dinner ? It's foolish how I am hungry."

" I have do the best I can, darleen," Anastasia said sadly. " There was not much of money—only forty-five centimes. See, I have buy sausage and salad and some bread. That leave for supper to-night four sous. Go on. Eat, darleen. I don't want anything."

I looked at the glossy red *saucisson-a-la-mulet,* the stringy head of chicory, the stale bread. After all, spread out there and backed by a steaming jug of coffee, it didn't look such a bad repast. I kissed her for the pains she had taken.

" Hold up your apron," I said sadly.

Wonderingly she obeyed. Then I threw into it one by one ten crisp pink banknotes, each for one hundred francs. I thought her eyes would drop out, they were so wide.

" Eight—nine—ten hundred. There, I guess we

can afford to go out for *déjeuner* to-day. What do you say to our old friend, the Café Soufflet ? "

" It is not true, this money ? You are not doing this for laughing ? "

" You bet your life. It's real money. There's more of it coming up—fifteen more of these *billets deux*. So come on to the café, Little Thing, and I'll tell you all the good tidings."

Seated in the restaurant, I was in the dizziest heights of rapture, and bubbling over with plans. Such a dramatic plunge into prosperity dazzled me.

" First of all," I said, " we must both from head to heel get a complete outfit of new clothes. We'll each take a hundred francs and spend the afternoon buying things. Then I'll get our stuff out of pawn. Then as soon as we get things straight we'll find a new apartment."

Suddenly she stopped me. " *Mon Dieu !* Where you get the clothes ? "

" Oh, I quite forgot. They're Helstern's. I'll just run round to his place to return them. He might want to go out. Here, give me one of those bits of paper and I'll pay my debts."

I found the sculptor in his underwear, philosophically smoking his Turk's-head pipe.

" Awfully obliged, old man, for the togs. I never could have ventured into that hotel in my old ones. Well, here's the money you lent me, and a thousand thanks."

" Sure you can spare it ? "

" Yes, and another if you want it. Why, man, I'm a litttle Crœsus. I'm simply reeking with the stuff. I feel as if I could buy up the Bank of France, Just touched a thou,' and more coming up."

" Well, I'm awfully glad for your sake. I'm glad to get this money too. D'ye know what I'm going to do with it ? I'm going to hire a nurse for Solonge. It will relieve the tension somewhat. What with watching and anxiety, we're all worn out.

And, Madden, excuse me mentioning it, but that little woman of yours wants looking after. She's not overstrong in any case, and she's been working herself to death. I don't know what we would have done without her down there, but there were times when I was on the point of sending her home."

"All right. Thanks for telling me. I say, as far as the Môme is concerned, I'd like to do something. Let's give you another hundred."

"No, no, I don't think it's necessary in the meantime. If I want more I'll call on you. You're off? Well, good-bye just now."

As far as they concerned Anastasia I thought a good deal over his words, and when I returned, after an afternoon spent in buying a new suit, hat, and boots, I found her lying on her bed, her hundred intact.

When a woman is too sick to spend money in new clothes it's time to call a doctor. This, in spite of her protestations, I promptly did, to be told as promptly that she was a very sick woman indeed. She had, said the medico, never fully recovered from her confinement, and had been running down ever since. For the present she must remain in bed.

Then he hesitated. "If your wife is not carefully looked after there is danger of her becoming *poitrinaire.*"

I was startled. In the tension of literary effort, in the egotism of art, I had paid little heed to her. If she had been less perfect, perhaps I should have thought more of her. But she just fitted in, made things smooth, effaced herself. She was of that race that make the best wives in the world. The instinct is implanted in them by long heredity. Anastasia was a born wife, just as she was a born mother. Yes, I had neglected her, and the doctor left me exceedingly pensive and remorseful.

"You must hurry up and get well, child," I said, as she lay there looking frail and wistful. "Then

we're going away on a holiday. We're going to Brittany by the sea. I'm tired of grey days. I want them all blue and gold. We'll wander down lanes sweet with May, and sit on the yellow sands."

She listened fondly, as I painted pictures, growing ever more in love with my vision.

" Yes, I try to get well, queek, just to please you, darleen. Excuse me, I geeve you too much trooble. I want so much to be good wife to you. That is the bestest thing for me. I don't want ever you be sorry you marry me. If you was, I sink I die."

Once I had conceived myself in the part of a nurse I entered into it with patience and enthusiasm. I am not lavish in the display of affection ; but in these days I was more tender and considerate than ever I had been, and Anastasia was duly grateful. So passed two weeks—the daily visits of the doctor, patient vigils on my part, hours of pain and ease on hers.

In Bohemia it never rains but it pours ; so with cruel irony in the face of my good fortune other successes began to surprise me. Within two weeks I had seven of my stories accepted, and the total revenue from them was twelve pounds. I felt that the worst of the fight was over. I had enough now to carry me on till I had written another novel. I need not do this pot-boiling work any more.

Every day came Helstern with news of the growing prowess of the Môme. She was able to sit up a little. Her legs were like spindles, and she could not walk ; but she looked rarely beautiful, almost angelic. In a few days he was going to get a chair on wheels, and take her out in the gardens.

" I can't make this out," I said chaffingly. " You must have made an awful hit with Frosine. Why don't you marry the girl ? "

He looked startled.

" Don't be absurd. Why, I'm twenty years older

than she is. Besides, I'm a cripple. Besides, I'm a confirmed bachelor. Besides, she's a confirmed widow."

"No young woman's ever a confirmed widow. Besides—she's no widow."

"Good God! You don't mean to tell me Solonge is ——"

"Why, yes, I thought you knew. Anyway, there was no reason to tell you anything like that."

Helstern rose slowly. My information seemed to be exceedingly painful to him. That firm mouth with its melancholy twist opened as if to speak. Then, without saying a word, he took his hat and went off.

"After all," I thought, "why not? Frosine is as good as gold, a serene, sensible woman. I'd marry her myself if I wasn't already married to Anastasia. I wonder . . ."

Thereupon I started upon my career as a match-maker. Why is it that the married man is so anxious to induce others to embrace matrimony? Is it a sense of duty, a desire to prevent other men shirking their duty? Or (as no woman is perfect) is it a desire to see the flies in our ointment outnumbered by the flies in our neighbour's? Or, as marriage is a meritorious compulsion to behave, is it a desire to promote merit among our bachelor friends by making them behave also? In any case, behold me as a bachelor stalker, Helstern my first quarry. I did not see him for a week, then one afternoon I came across him by the great gloomy pile of the Pantheon, gazing at Rodin's statue of the Thinker.

How often have I stood in front of it myself! That nude figure fascinates me as does no other in modern sculpture. The essence of simplicity, it seems to say unutterable things. Arms of sledgehammer force, a great back corded with muscle, legs banded

as if with iron, could anything be more expressive of magnificent strength? Yet, oh, the pathos of it—the small, undeveloped skull, the pose of perplexed, desperate thought!

So must primitive man have crouched and agonised in that first dim dawn of intelligence. Within that brain of a child already glimmers the idea of something greater than physical force; within that brute man Mind is beginning its supreme struggle over Matter. Here is the birth of brain domination. Here is the savage, thwarted, mocked, impotent; yet trying with every fibre of his being to enter that world of thought which he is so conscious of, and cannot yet understand. Pathetic! Yes, it typifies the ceaseless struggle of man from the beginning, the agony of effort by which he has raised himself from the mire. Far from a Newton, a Darwin, a Goethe, this crude, elementary Thinker! Yet, with his brain of a child as he struggles for Light, who shall say he is not in his way as great. Salute him! He stands for the cumulative effort of the race.

Helstern himself, as he stood there in his black cloak, leaning on his stick with the gargoyle head, was no negligible figure. I was struck by a resemblance to a great actor, and the thought came that here, but for that misshapen foot, was a tragedian lost to the world. This was strengthened by the voice of the man. Helstern, in his deep vibrating tones, could have held a crowd spellbound while he told them how he missed his street car.

"Great," I said, indicating the statue.

"Great, man! It's a glory and a despair. To me it represents the vast striving of the spirit, and its impotence to express its dreams. I, too, think as greatly as a Rodin, but my efforts to give my thought to a form are only a mockery and a pain. I, too, have agonised to do; yet what am I confronted with? —Failure. For twenty years I've studied, worked, dreamed of success, and to-day I am as far as ever

from the goal. Yes, I realise my impotence. I have lived my life in vain. Old, grey, a cripple, a solitary. What is there left for me ? "

He finished with a lofty gesture.

" Nothing left," I said, " but to have a drink. Come on."

But no. Helstern reposed on his dignity, and refused to throw off the mantle of gloom.

" I tell you what it is," I suggested. " I think you're in love."

" Bah ! I was never in love but once, and that was twenty years ago. We were going to be married. The day was fixed. Then on the marriage eve she went to try on the wedding gown. There was a large fire in the room, and suddenly as she was bending before the mirror to tie a ribband, the flimsy robe caught the flame. In a moment she was ablaze. Screaming and panic-stricken she ran, only to fall unconscious. After three days of agony she died. I attended a funeral, not a wedding."

I shuddered—not at his story, but because the incident occurred in my novel, *The Cup and the Lip.* Alas ! How Life plagiarizes Fiction. I murmured huskily :

" Cheer up, old man ! "

He laughed bitterly. " Twenty years ! I might have had sons and daughters grown up by now. Perhaps even grandchildren like Solonge. How strange it seems ! What a failure it's all been ! And now it's too late. I'm a weary, unloved old man."

" Oh, rot," I said. " Look here, be sensible. Why don't you and Frosine hitch up ? There's a fine, home-loving woman, and she thinks you're a little tin god."

" How d'ye know that ? " he demanded eagerly.

" Isn't she always saying so to my wife ? " (This was a little exaggeration on my part.) " I tell you, Helstern, that woman adores you. Just

think how different that unkempt studio of yours wou d be with such a bright soul to cheer it."

"I've a good mind to ask her."

"Why don't you?"

"Well, to give you the truth, old man, I've been trying to, but I haven't the courage. I've got the frame of a lion, Madden, with the heart of a mouse."

"I'll tell you what. If I go down and speak for you will you go through it?"

"Yes, I will; but—there's no hurry you know. To-morrow . . ."

"Come on. No time like the present. We'll find her at work."

"Yes, but . . . will you go in and sound her first?"

"Yes, yes. Don't be such a coward. You can wait outside."

He stumped along beside me till we came to the rue Mazarin, and I left him while I went to interview Frosine.

"Oh, it's you," she said gladly. "Come in. It's early, but I put Solonge to bed so that I could get a lot of work finished. See! it's a wedding trousseau. How is Madame? Is everything well? Can I do anything for you? Solonge remembered you in her prayers. You may kiss her if you like."

"How lovely she is," I said, stooping over the child. I was trying to think of some way in which to lead up to my subject.

Frosine never left off working. Once more she was the bright, practical woman, capable of fighting for herself in the struggle of life.

"How hard you work! Do you never tire, never get despondent?"

She looked at me with a happy laugh. The fine wrinkles seemed to radiate from her eyes.

"No; why should I? I have my child. I am free. There's no one on my back. You see I'm

proud. I don't like anyone over me. Freedom is a passion with me."

"Yes, but you can't always work. You must think of the future. Some day you'll grow old."

She shrugged her shoulders. "There will still be Solonge."

"Yes, but you must think of her too. Listen to me, Mademoiselle Frosine. I'm your friend. I would like to see you beyond the need of such toil as this. Well, I come to make you an offer of marriage."

She stared at me.

"I mean, I come on behalf of a friend of mine. He is very lonely, and he wants you to be his wife. I refer to Monsieur Helstern."

She continued to stare as if amazed.

"It is droll Monsieur Helstern cannot speak for himself," she said at last.

"He has been trying to, but—well, you know Helstern. He's as shy as a child."

Her face changed oddly. The laughter went out of it. Her head drooped, and she gazed at her work in an unseeing way. She was silent so long that I became uncomfortable. Then suddenly she looked up, and her eyes were aglitter with tears.

"Listen, my friend. I want you to hear my story, then tell me if I ought to marry Monsieur Helstern.

"I've got to go back many years—fifteen. My father was in business, and I was sheltered as all French girls of that class are. Then father died, leaving mother with scarcely a sou. I had to work. Well, I was expert with my needle, and soon found employment with a dressmaker.

"You know how it is with us when one has no *dot*. It is nearly impossible to make a marriage in one's own class. One young man loved me and wanted to marry me; but his mother would not hear of it because I was poor. She had another girl

with a good *dot* picked out for him, and as children are not allowed to marry without their parents' consent he became discouraged. I do not blame him. It was his duty to marry as his mother wished.

" Well, it was hard for me. It was indeed long before my smiles came back. But it makes no difference if one's heart aches ; one must work. I went on working to keep a roof over my mother's head.

" By and by she died and I was alone. That was not very cheerful. I had to live by myself in a little room. Oh ! I was so lonely and sad ! Remember that I was not a girl of the working class. I had been educated. I could not bring myself to marry a workman who would come home drunk and beat me. No, I preferred to sit and sew in my garret. And the thought came to me that this was going to be my whole life—this garret, this sewing. What a destiny ! To go on till I was old and worn out ; then a pauper's grave. My spirit was not broken. Can you wonder that I rebelled ?

" When I was a little girl I was always playing with my dollies. When I got too old for them I took to nursing other little ones. It seemed an instinct. And so, whenever I thought of marriage it was with the idea of having children of my own to love and care for.

" Imagine me then with all hopes of marriage destroyed. ' Is all my life,' I said, ' going to be fruitless ? Am I going to be like those other women, living without hope or joy ? It is wrong. It is a sin against nature, against God. Must I be denied my rights as a woman to become the mother of a child ? I desire it. I demand it. I do not ask for the love of a husband, but I do plead for a child of my own flesh to cherish for all my years. If the chance comes,' I vowed, ' I will take it.'

" One evening I was standing before a print-shop

looking at some drawings when a tall, fair man stopped to examine them too. He was an artist, an Englishman. Somehow he spoke to me, then walked with me as far as my home. Well, to make my story short, he was the father of Solonge.

"I never was so happy as then. I did not dream such happiness could be. I'm not sorry for anything. But I knew such things cannot last. In time he had to go. His home, his mother called him. We were both very sad, for we loved one another. But what would you? We all know these things must have an end. It's the life.

"The parting was so sad. I cried three days. But I told him he must go. He must think of his position, his family. I was only a poor little French girl who did not matter. He must forget me.

"I did not tell him I was going to have a child though. He would never have gone then. He would have made me marry him, and then I would have spoiled his career. No, I said nothing. But, oh, how the thought glowed in me! At last I would have a child, my own.

"He wanted to settle money on me, but I would not have it. Then, with tears in his eyes, he went away, swearing that he would come back. Perhaps he would have. I don't know. He was killed in a railway accident. That is one reason I do not wish to be reminded of artists. He was a famous artist. You would know his name if I told it. But I never will. I am afraid his family would try to take away Solonge.

"You see I have worked away, and my garret has been full of sunshine. Oh, how different it was! I sang, I laughed, I was the happiest woman in Paris. I'm not sorry for anything. I think I did right. Now I've told you, do you still think Monsieur Helstern would be willing to marry me?"

"More so than ever," I said. "As far as I know, he has pretty much the same views as you have."

"He says so little to me. But he has been so kind, so good. I believe I owe it to him that I still have my little one."

"Yes, he's not a bad old sort. I don't think you'd ever regret it."

"You may tell him my story, then, and if he doesn't think I'm a bad woman . . ."

"He'll understand. But let me go and tell him now. He's waiting round the corner."

"Stop! Stop!" she protested. But I hurried away and found the sculptor seated outside the nearest café, divided between anxiety and a glass of beer.

"It's all right, old chap," I cried. "I've squared it all for you. Now you must go right in and clinch things."

"But I'm not prepared. I——"

"Come on. Strike while the iron's hot. I've just been getting the sad story of her life, and she is in a sentimental mood. Now's the time."

So I dragged him to Frosine's door and pushed him in.

Then this was what I heard, for Helstern's voice would almost penetrate a steel safe.

"You know, Mademoiselle Frosine, I—I love your daughter."

"Yes, Monsieur Helstern."

"I love her so much that I want to ask you if you'll let me be a father to her."

"But do you love me?"

"I—I don't know. I've never thought of that. But we both love Solonge. Won't that be enough?"

"I don't know. Let us wait awhile. Ask me some months from now. Perhaps you've made a mistake. I want you to be quite sure. If by then you find you've not made a mistake, I—I might let myself love you very easily."

"You've made me strangely happy. Everything seems changed to me. I may hope then?"

"Yes."

I did not hear any more. But a moment after Helstern joined me.

"Oh, Madden, how can I ever thank you! You've made me the happiest of men."

Looking back at the lighted window we saw Frosine bent again over her work, trying to make up for lost time. Helstern gazed at the shadow and I could scarce draw him away. What fools these lovers be!

CHAPTER IV

A CHAPTER THAT BEGINS WELL AND ENDS BADLY

J'aime Paimpol et sa falaise,
Son clocher et son grand pardon ;
J'aime surtout la Paimpolaise
Qui m'attend au pays Breton.

It is Little Thing singing as she sits by the poppy patch before the door. There are hundreds of poppies. They dance in gleeful glory, and their scarlet is so luminous it seems about to burst into flame. Maybe the shell-pink in the girl's cheeks is a reflection of that radiant glow.

The coast of Brittany dimples as it smiles, and in its most charming dimple is tucked away our little village. The sea has all the glitter of crushed gems. It sparkles in amethyst and emerald ; it glooms to garnet and sardonyx. There is a bow of golden sand, and the hill-side is ablaze with yellow brown.

" Dreamhaven " I call our house, and it stands between the poppies and the pines. A house of Breton granite, built to suffice a score of generations, it glimmers like some silvery grand-dame, and its roof is velvety with orange-coloured moss.

We have been here three weeks and Anastasia has responded wonderfully to the change. Nothing can exceed her delight. She sings all day, rivalling the merle that wakes us every morning with his flute-like run of melody.

She loves to sit in a corner of the old garden where a fig tree climbs the silvery wall. There she will knit tranquilly and watch the little lizards flicker over the sun-warmed stone, then pause with panting sides and bead-like eyes to peer around. But for me, I prefer the scented gloom of the pine coppice

beyond the garden. Dearly do I love the sudden solitude of pines.

I have corrected the proofs of *Tom, Dick and Harry* there. I am relieved to find the story goes with *vim*. It is as light as a biscuit, and as easy of mental digestion. I have sent off the last batch of proofs ; my part is done ; the rest is Fate.

Now I turn to my jolly Bretons, so dirty and devout, so toilworn and so tranquil. My old women have the bright, clear eyes of children. Never have they worn hat or shoes, never left their native heaths. Yet they are happy—because it has never struck them that they are not happy.

My young women all want to marry sailors so that they may be left at home in tranquillity. They do not desire to see over-much of their lords and masters, who, I fear, are fond of mixing *eau-de-vie* with their cider. If they go to live in cities they generally die of consumption. Their costume is hauntingly Elizabethan, and they are three hundred years behind the times.

* * * * * *

About a week ago I had a curious conversation with Anastasia.

"Little Thing," I began, "do you know that if I like I can go away and marry some other French girl?"

"What do you mean?" she said, somewhat startled.

"I mean that as far as France is concerned our marriage doesn't hold."

"*Mon Dieu!*"

"It's all right by English law, but French law doesn't recognise it."

"How droll! But what does it matter? You don't want marry other French girls?"

"No, but it's interesting to know that one can."

"But, me, too. Have I not right to marry some other persons?"

"Hum! I never thought of that."

"Another thing," I continued, "under French law man and wife hold property in common. Now, supposing you came into fortune, I couldn't touch it."

"Ah! now you speak for laughing. I nevaire come into fortune."

"Well, suppose I come into a fortune—but then that's equally absurd; anyway, I just wanted to point out to you that by a curious vagary of the law we could repudiate our marriage and contract others—in France."

Anastasia looked very thoughtful. Though I had spoken jestingly I might have known that with her serious imagination she would take it gravely. Surely enough, a few days after she brought up the subject.

"I sink I like very much, darleen, if we get marry once more, French way, if you don't mind."

"Not at all; only—I don't want to make a habit of it."

"Excuse me, darleen; and please I like it very much if we get marry in Catelick church."

"All right. We'll get married in Notre Dame this time."

"But . . ." here she hesitated—"zere is one trouble."

"Well, what is it?"

"In France it is necessaire by law I have consent of my fazzaire and my muzzaire."

"Well, seeing that they're in (we hope) heaven, it won't be very easy to get it."

"Oh, no! I nevaire say my muzzaire is dead."

"But isn't she?"

"I don't know. I have not hear of her for many year. I leave wiz my fazzaire when I was leetle girls, before he put me in the *couvent*. My fazzaire get separation from my muzzaire. She's very bad womans. She's beat my fazzaire very cruel, so's he get separation. My fazzaire was poet."

"And your mother?"

" Oh, she was not at all *chic*. She was what we call ' merchant of the four seasons.' "

" Good heavens ! You don't mean one of those women that hawk stuff in the street with hand barrows ? "

Anastasia nodded gravely.

I shuddered. Father a *cabaret* poet ; mother a street pedlar of cabbages and onions. *Sacré mud !* Then a sudden suspicion curdled my blood.

" Tell me," I demanded, " is it not that your mother's name is Seraphine ? "

" Yes," she exclaimed, amazedly.

" And she's a very big woman with a large nose ? "

" Yes, yes ; how you know ? "

" Well then, let me inform you that your respected parent is at present doing business in a rather flourishing way in the *Halles*. She imports *escargots* and wears seven diamond rings on one hand. Judging by that hand alone, there's a respectable prospect of your becoming an heiress after all."

" She's terrible woman," said Anastasia, after I had explained my meeting with her mother. " I'm afraid she's make trooble. She's behave very cruel to my fazzaire and she not like me, because when they separate I choose go wiz heem. She nevaire forgeeve me. I'm 'fraid she's never consent to our marriage in France."

" Wait till we get back to Paris and we'll tackle her."

" When we go back to Paris ? "

" Next week. I can't afford to rent the house after the end of the month."

" I'm sorry to go. I love it here."

" Yes, but I must get back to work again. We must bid our jolly Bretons good-bye."

* * * * * *

We bade them good-bye this morning ; great, great-grandfather Dagorn herding his cows on the velvety dune ; Yvves swinging his scythe as he whisked

down the heavy crimson clover; Marie stooped over her churn; Mother Dagorn whose withered cheeks are apple-bright; the rosy-faced children, the leaping dogs. We looked our last on that golden beach, that jewelled sea; we roamed our last amid the hedges of honey-suckle, the cherry-trees snowed with blossom, the stream where the embattled lilies brandished blades and flaunted starry banners. Last of all, and with something very like sadness, we bade good-bye to that old house I called "Dreamhaven," which stands between the poppies and the pines.

* * * * * *

Back in Paris. The dear sunny boulevards are once more embowered in tender green, and once more I am a dreamy Luxemburger, feeding my Bohemian sparrows in that cool, still grove where gleam the busts of Murger and Verlaine; once more I roam the old streets, seeking the spirit of the past; once more I am the apostle of the clear laugh and the joyous mind.

One of the first persons I met as I walked down the spinal column of the Quarter, the Boul' Mich,' was Helstern. He had just come from a lecture by Bergsen at the Sorbonne and was indignant because he had been obliged to stand near the door.

"Bergsen's a society craze just now. The place was crowded with wretched women that couldn't understand a word of his lecture. They chattered and stared at one another through their lorgnettes. One wretched *cocotte* threw the old man a bunch of violets."

"What did he do?"

"He took it up, and after looking at it as if he didn't know what it was, he put it in his pocket."

"Well, how's everyone? What have you been doing? Some symbolical group, I suppose?"

"No; I've decided to go in for simple things, the simpler the better. I've done a little head and

bust of Solonge I want you to see. I'm rather pleased with it."

"All right. I'll come as soon as we get settled."

"Where are you going this time?"

"I've taken a *logement* on the Passage d'Enfer; you know it—a right-angled street of quaint old houses that runs into the Boulevard Raspail."

"I know. I once lived in the rue Boissonade. What are you going to do now?"

"Another novel, I suppose. I have enough money to last me for five months. Just fancy! five months to write and not worry about anything at all. How's Frosine and the Môme?"

Helstern beamed. Then for the first time I noticed a remarkable change in him. No longer could I call him the "melancholy Dane" (he was really a Swede, by the way). He had discarded his severe black stock for a polka-dot Lavallière, and he was actually wearing a check suit.

"Come with us on Sunday. We are all going to St. Cloud."

"I'll ask my wife. Things going all right?"

"Yes, I think she'll consent to name the day."

"Well, I congratulate you. And how's Lorrimer?"

"He seems to have taken up with a new girl, a dark, Italian kind of a type. I've seen him with her at the cafés. He's fickle in his attachments."

"That must be Lucretia," I thought; and I congratulated myself on my adroit disentanglement. Then I felt some compunction as I thought of Rougette.

But I was reassured, for I saw the two together that very afternoon in front of the café du Panthéon. Rougette looked sweet and serene. Whatever might have been the philandering of Lorrimer it had not disturbed her Breton phlegm. Or, perhaps it was that in her simple faith she was incapable of believing him a gay deceiver. She was more than ever distractingly pretty, so that, looking at her,

I could not imagine how anyone could neglect her for the olive-skinned Lucretia.

Lorrimer, too, was the picture of prosperity. He wore a new Norfolk suit, and a wide-brimmed grey hat. He looked more faunesque and insouciant than ever, a being all nerves, energy and indomitable gaiety.

"Hullo," he greeted me; "here's old Daredeath Dick. Come and join us. Rougette wants to hear all about her 'pays Breton.' You're looking very fit. How's everything?"

"Excellent. I'm to have a novel published next week, and I've got enough money to follow it up with another."

"What a wonderful chap you are to be able to spread your money out like that! You know wealth would be my ruin. Poverty's my best friend. Wealth really worries me. I never could work if I had lots of money. By the way, you must see my picture at the Salon des Independents. Rougette and the Neapolitaine are in it. It's creating quite a sensation."

"How is our dark friend?"

He shrugged his shoulders gaily. "Just a little embarrassing at times. She's awfully jealous of Rougette. The other day in the studio she snatched up a knife, and I thought she was going to stick it into me; but she only proceeded to slash up a picture I had done called *The Jolie Bretonne*, for which Rougette had posed. After that we had a fuss, and I told her all was over between us. So we parted in wrath, and I haven't spoken to her since. She has a devil of a temper; a good girl to keep away from."

Poor unsuspecting Lorrimer! I felt guilty for a moment. Then I changed the subject.

"But you're looking very spruce. Don't tell me you've sold a picture."

"No, but I've got a job, a steady job. I'm doing

cartoons every night at the Noctambules. You must come round and see me."

I promised I would, and returned to the Passage d'Enfer, where Anastasia was busy putting our new apartment in order. There was a bedroom, dining-room, and a kitchen about the size of a packing-box; but she was greatly pleased with everything. We supplemented our old furniture with some new articles from the bazaars. A dressing-table of walnut, a wardrobe with mirror doors, and cretonne curtains with a design of little roses. Soon, we found ourselves installed with a degree of comfort we had not hitherto known.

It was one evening when Anastasia, who had been papering the dining-room, retired to bed quite early, that I decided to accept Lorrimer's invitation and visit the Noctambules. This is a cabaret in a dark side-street that parallels the Boul' Mich'. I found myself in a long, low room whose walls were covered with caricatures of artists who in their Bohemian days had been habitués of the place. There was an array of chairs, a shabby little platform, and a piano. As each *chansonnier* came on he was introduced by an irrepressible young man with a curly mop of hair and merry eyes. Then, as the singer finished, the volatile young man called for three rounds of hearty applause.

The cabaret *chansonniers* of Paris are unique in their way. They are a connecting-link between literature and the stage—hermaphrodites of the entertaining world. They write, compose and sing their own songs, which, often, not only have a distinctive note that makes for art, but are sung inimitably well. Ex-poets, students with a turn for satiric diversion, journalists of Bohemia, all go to swell the ranks of these inheritors of the traditions of Beranger. From that laureate of the gutter, Aristide Bruant, down to the smallest of them, they portray with passionate fidelity the humour and

tragedy of the street—irreverently Rabelaisian at one moment, pathetically passionate at the next.

As I enter, Marcel Legay is in the midst of a song of fervid patriotism. In spite of his poetic name, he is a rubicund little man with the voice and the mane of a lion. Then follows Vincent Hispy, with catlike eyes and droll, caustic wit. Then comes Zavier Privas, big and boisterous as the west wind, lover to his soul of the *chansons* he writes and sings. Finally, with a stick of charcoal and an eager smile, Lorrimer appears. A screen is wheeled up on which are great sheets of coarse paper. The artist announces that his first effort will be Sarah Bernhardt. He makes about five lightning lines, and there is the divine Sarah. Then follow in swift succession Polaire, Dranem, Mistinguette, Mayol, and other lights of the Paris stage.

And now the cartoonist turns to the audience and asks them to name some one high in politics. A voice shouts Clemenceau. In a moment the well-known features are on the board. Poincaré! It is done. And so on for a dozen others. Applause greets every new cartoon, and the artist retires covered with glory.

"How did you like it?" grins Lorrimer, as he joins me in the audience.

"Splendid! Why, man, you could make barrels of money in America doing that sort of thing."

"I'd rather be a pauper in Paris than a money-changer in Chicago. But there's Rougette at the back of the hall. Doesn't she look stunning? Thanks to this job, I've been able to pay her for a good many sittings, and now she's got a new gown and hat. By Jove! that girl will be the making of me yet. Her loveliness really inspires me. Nature leaves me cold, but woman, beautiful woman!—I could go on painting her eternally and not ask for other reward."

And, indeed, the Breton girl, with her ash-gold hair

and her complexion of roses and cream, was a delicate vision of beauty.

"Never let a woman see that you cannot be serenely happy without her," say Lorrimer. "I'd do anything for Rougette (short of marrying her), yet I never let her know it. And so she's faithful to me. Others have tried to steal her from me; have offered her luxury; but no, she's the same devoted, unspoiled girl. Just look at her, Madden, a pure, lustrous pearl. Think what a life such a girl might have in this Paris, where men make queens of beautiful women! What triumphs! what glories! Yet there she is, content to follow the fortunes of an obscure painter. But come on and join the girl. They're going to do a little silhouette drama."

As we sit by Rougette, who smiles radiantly, the lights go out, and beyond the stage a little curtain goes up, showing a fisher cottage in Brittany. The scene is early morning, the sea flooded with the coral light of dawn. Then across the face of the picture comes the tiny silhouettes of the fishermen carrying their nets. The cottage is next shown in the glow of noon, and, lastly, by night, with the fisher boats passing over the face of the moon.

Then the scene changes. We see the inside of the cabin—the bed, the wardrobe of oak and brass, the great stone fireplace, the ship hanging over it, the old grandmother sitting by her spinning-wheel. To her come the children begging for a story, and she tells them one from out the past—a story of her youth, the rising of the Vendée.

All this is made clear by three singers, who, somewhere in the darkness, tell it in sweet, wild strains of Breton melody. There is a soprano, a tenor, a bass; now one takes up the story, then another; then all three voices blend with beautiful effect. And as they sing we see the tiny silhouettes of the peasants, vivid and clear-cut, passing across the face of the changing scene. Those strong, melodious

voices tell of how the farmer-soldiers rose and fought; how they marched in the snow; how they suffered; how they died. It is sad, sweet, beautiful; and now the music grows more dramatic; the action quickens; the climax draws near.

And as I sit there with eyes fixed on that luminous space, I feel that something else, also terrible, is about to happen. Surely some one is moving in the darkness behind us? Even in that black silence I am conscious of a shadow blacker still. Surely I can hear the sound of hard, panting breath? That dreadful breathing passes me, passes Lorrimer, comes to an arrest behind Rougette.

Then I hear a scream, shriek on shriek, such as I never dreamed within the gamut of human agony. And in the hush of panic that follows the lights go up.

Rougette is lying on the floor, her head buried in her arms, uttering heart-rending cries. Lorrimer, with a face of absolute horror, is bending over her, trying to raise her as she grovels there in agony.

What is it? A hundred faces are turned towards us, each the mask of terror and dismay. I will always remember those faces that suddenly flamed at us out of the dark, all so different, yet with the one awful expression.

Then I see a tiny bottle at my feet. Almost mechanically I stoop and pick it up; but I drop it as if I had been stung. I fall to rubbing my fingers in agony, and everywhere I rub there is a brown burn. Now I understand the poor, writhing, twisting girl on the floor, and a similar shudder of understanding seems to convulse the crowd. There comes a hoarse whisper—"*Vitriol!*"

Turning to the door, I am just in time to see a girl in black make her escape, an olive-skinned girl with beetle-black hair and the eyes of an odalisque. And Lorrimer looks at me in a ghastly way, and I know that he too has seen.

CHAPTER V

"THE GREAT QUIETUS"

"It's terrible! It's unspeakable!" I groaned, on arising next morning. "That poor girl, so good, so sweet! And to think that she should suffer so—through me, through me."

There was a knock at the door, and Lorrimer appeared. "It's horrible! It's unthinkable!" he moaned. "Poor Rougette, who never harmed a living soul. And to think that I should have brought this calamity upon her."

"It's my fault," I objected; "I introduced Lucretia to you."

"No, no; it's my fault," he insisted. "I trifled with the girl's feelings."

"Well, any way," I said, "what are we going to do about it?"

"I don't know. What do you think?"

"I'd marry her," I suggested. "But I can't, being married already."

"I'll marry her," cried Lorrimer. "You know, last night on the way to the hospital, when I saw that beautiful face covered with those hideous bandages, I wept like a child. She told me not to mind. It was not my fault. She would enter a convent, become a nun. Just fancy, Madden, that lovely face eaten to the bone, a horrible sight. . . ."

"Perhaps it won't be so bad, old chap. Perhaps she's only burned on one side; then the other side of her face will still be beautiful."

"Yes, that's one blessing. I told her as they took her away. 'Rougette,' I said, 'the day you come out of the hospital is the day of our marriage. You must not think of anything else. I'll devote my

life to you.' Could I do less, old man? We may talk cynically about women, but when it comes to the point, we're all ready to die for 'em. I'd have given anything last night if it had been me. It's always the innocent that suffer."

"Everyone is talking of it this morning," I observed. "It's in all the papers, but no one suspects who did it. Are you going to tell the police?"

"No, how can I? I'm indirectly to blame. But oh! if I can lay my hands on that girl!" He broke off with a harsh laugh that was more eloquent of vengeful rage than any words.

"Well, cheer up, old man. I applaud your action in marrying Rougette. And perhaps she won't be so terribly disfigured after all."

So I accompanied Lorrimer on his way to the hospital, and we were going down the Boul' Mich' when suddenly he turned.

"Let me leave you now. Here's that blithering little Bébérose coming to buttonhole me and tell me of his love affairs. I'm not in a fit state to listen at present. You just talk to him, will you?"

So I was left to interview Monsieur Bébérose, whom I had met once or twice in his capacity as art patron and the proud purchaser (for an absurdly small price) of one of Lorrimer's masterpieces. Monsieur Bébérose is a retired manufacturer of Arles sausages, a man of fifty, and reputed to be wealthy. He is a little, overfed man, not unremotedly resembling the animal from whose succulence his money has been made. Besides the crimson button of the Legion, he wears as a watch-charm a large gall-stone that had been extracted from him by a skilful surgeon. On the fore-front of his head is a faint fringe of hair, trimmed and parted like an incipient moustache; otherwise his skull would make an excellent skating-rink for the flies. Add to this that he is a widower, on the look-out for a second wife.

"Well," I hailed him, "you're not married yet?"

Monsieur Bébérose shook his head mournfully. "No, things do not march at present. You remember I told you about Mademoiselle Juliette. Well, I like that girl very much. I have known her since she was a baby. I think I like to marry her. So I ask the mother. Well, she put me off. She say she decide in a week. Then in a week I go back and she tell me that she think Mademoiselle Juliette too young to marry me, but she have a girl friend, Mademoiselle Lucille, who want to get married. Perhaps I would be pleased with the friend."

Here Monsieur Bébérose sighed deeply.

"Well, she introduce me to Mademoiselle Lucille, and I give them all a dinner at Champeaux! It cost me over one hundred francs that dinner. The way the mother of Mademoiselle Juliette drink champagne make me afraid for her. I am pleased with Mademoiselle Lucille very well, and I think I like to marry her. So I tell the mother if the girl, who is orphan, is willing, it goes with me, and she says she will speak with the girl and advise her."

Here Monsieur Bébérose began to get indignant.

"So in a week I go back and say to the mother of Mademoiselle Juliette, 'Well, how does it go with Mademoiselle Lucille?' She shrug her shoulders.

"'Lucille! Oh yes; I have never asked her. I've been thinking it over, and I think I'll give you Juliette after all.'

"Well, I like Lucille best now, but I like Juliette, too, so I say: 'Very well, madame, it goes with me. When may I have the pleasure of taking to the theatre my fiancée?'

"But Madame say it is not *convenable* if I go out alone with her daughter. She must accompany us. So when we go to the theatre she sit between us; when we have dinner she watch me all the time. Indeed, I have not been able to have one word in

private with Mademoiselle Juliette. Perhaps I am not reasonable ; but I think I ought to find out how she feels towards me before I become fiancé. I think marriage is better if there is a little affection with it, don't you ? "

" Yes, it's preferable, I think."

" Of course, I know Juliette will obey her mother and marry me ; but me, I do not like the way they treat me about Lucille. Am I like a sheep that they shall pull about ? Besides, Juliette is so young—just nineteen. It might be better if I find some nice young widow with a little money, don't you think ? "

I agreed with him that the matter was worthy of serious consideration, and that the *belle-mère* was likely to be a disturbing factor in his domestic equation. So, solemnly warning him to be careful, I left him more in doubt than before.

When I reached home Anastasia was awaiting me.

" Well, darleen, what is it that you have of news about Rougette ? "

" I don't know. Lorrimer thinks she'll have a mask down one side of her face. He swears he's going to marry her though. Fancy " (I shuddered) " marrying a medallion. Now, there's a dramatic situation for you. Handsome, romantic, young artist—wife, supremely beautiful to port, a hideous mask to starboard. His increasing love of the beautiful side, his growing horror of the other. His guilty knowledge that he is himself responsible for the disfigurement . . . why ! what a stunning story it would make, and what a tragic *dénouement !* How mean of life to steal so brazenly the material of fiction ! "

" Poor, poor girl," sighed Anastasia. " I must go to the hospital and see her this afternoon. And I too have some news for you."

" Not bad, I hope ? "

"No, I sink you are please. It is that Monsieur Helstern have call. He was so funny, so shy, so glad about somesing. Well, what you sink? He and Frosine get marry very soon and want you to be witness."

"Good! It'll be the best thing in the world for the old chap."

"Yes, he seem very happy—quite different."

"Funny," I remarked, "how everyone's thoughts seem turning to marriage. It must be epidemic. There's Helstern and Frosine. Here's Lorrimer saying he'll marry Rougette; and this morning, Monsieur Bébérose. By Jove! and weren't we talking about it too! Ah, there's an idea! Why shouldn't we have our *econd* marriage at the same time as Helstern and Lorrimer get tied up? You see four witnesses are needed at the ceremony, two male and two female. We can act as one another's witnesses as well as get married ourselves. And just think of the money we'll save on the carriages and the supper! Talk of killing three birds with one stone!"

"We must get my mother's *consentement* first."

"Ah, yes, my belligerent *belle-mère*. Well, we'll go and interview her to-morrow."

"I'm afraid," said Anastasia, blenching at the prospect.

"You mustn't be," I said bravely; "you have *me* to protect you. Remember you're my wife."

"Not by French law. But I will go with you, darleen. I know you are strong."

She looked at me with undisguised admiration. I think that Anastasia really thinks I am a hero.

In the afternoon she returned from the hospital with cheering news. It was not going so badly with Rougette after all. She had had a wonderful escape. A great deal of the acid had lodged in her veil, and what she had got began a little below the left ear. Her neck and breast were burned badly,

and she was suffering agony, but her beauty had been spared. By wearing collars of an extra height scarcely any one would suspect.

"Monsieur Lorrimer was there too. He's so change. I nevaire see a man so serious. Truly, I sink he mean marry Rougette all right."

Next morning, bright and early, we sallied forth to tackle the redoubtable Madame Séraphine. After reconnoitring cautiously we located her in her stall in the fish pavilion throned high amid her crates of *escargots*. As with beating hearts we approached we heard her voice in angry *argot* berating a meek wisp of a porter. Against the grey of her surroundings her face loomed huge and ruddy, and her eyes had the hard brightness of a hawk's. Again I wondered how she could ever have been the mother of my gentle Anastasia.

"Your father must have been the most angelic of little men," I murmured.

"He was," she answered breathlessly.

"You'd better go first," I suggested nervously.

"No, you," she protested, trying to get behind me.

"But, you've got to introduce me," I objected, trying to get behind her.

Then while we were rotating round each other suddenly the eyes of my *belle-mère* fell on us, and as they dwelt on Anastasia her mouth grew grimmer, and her nose more aggressive. Her whole manner bristled with pugnacity.

"*Tiens! Tiens!* if it isn't, of all the world, my little Tasie."

Anastasia went forward meekly; I followed sheepishly.

"Yes, Mémé," she said; "I've come to visit you."

The majestic woman relaxed not, nor did she make any motion to embrace her shrinking offspring.

"Well," she said, after a long, severe silence, "I

imagine that it is not all for pleasure you come to see your poor old mother. What is it?"

"Mémé, I want to present to you my husband."

Here I bowed impressively. The big woman with the folded arms shifted her gaze to me. It was a searching, sneering, almost derisive gaze, and I hated her on the spot.

"So!" she said, more grimly than ever, "and how is it you can get married without your mother's consent, if you please?"

"We were married in England, madame," I said politely. "But now we want to get married in France as well, and we are come to ask your consent."

"Ah!" she said sharply; "you are not really married then. And what if I refuse my consent? I do not know you, young man. How do I know if you are a fit husband for my precious little cabbage? Are you rich?"

"No."

"Are you a Catholic?"

"No."

"Not rich! Not a Catholic! And this man expects me to let him marry my little chicken, I who am so good with the Church, and can afford to give her a handsome *dot*. What is your business?"

"I am a writer."

"*Quel toupet!* Just the same as her worthless father, only he was worse—a poet. No, young man, I think I would prefer a different kind of husband for my sweet lamb."

"I won't marry anyone else, Mémé."

"Hold your tongue, girl! Do I not know my duty as a mother? You'll marry whom I choose."

"Then you refuse to give your consent?" I said with some heat.

Her manner changed cunningly.

"I do not say that. All I desire is to know you better. Will you come and have dinner with me some Sunday evening?"

After all, she was my *belle-mère*. I consented, and Anastasia seemed relieved. She promised to write and give us a date. Then I shook hands with her ; Anastasia pecked at her in the French fashion, and there was, to some appearance, a little family reconciliation.

" Perhaps the old lady's not so bad after all," I suggested ; but Anastasia was sceptical.

" I do not trust her. She have some ruse. We must wait and see."

That was a memorable day ; for on reaching home I felt the sudden spur of inspiration, and sitting down before the ramshackle typewriter, I headed up a clean sheet :

THE GREAT QUIETUS

A Novel

" The scene is on the top of a peak that overlooks a vast plain. A majestic old man, bearded even as the prophets, stands there looking at the western sky which the setting sun has turned into an ocean of gold. Island beyond island of cloud swims in that amber sea, each coral tinted and fringed with crimson foam. And as he gazes, the splendid old man is magnificently happy ; for is he not the last man left alive on this bad, sad earth, and is he not about to close his eyes on it for ever ?

" In the twenty-first century, luxury and wickedness had increased to such an extent that the whole world became decadent. The art of flying, brought to such perfection that all travelled by the air, had annihilated space, and the world had become very small indeed. Instead of Switzerland, people went for a week-end ski-ing to the Pole ; the unexplored places were Baedeckerized, and the wild creatures that formerly

roamed their valleys relegated to the alleys of zoological gardens.

"Behold then, a familiar world, shorn of all mystery; a tamed world, harnessed to the will of man; a sybaritic world, starred with splendid cities and caparisoned with limitless luxury. Its population had increased a thousand fold; its old religions were outgrown; its moral ideas engulfed in a general welter of cynicism and sensuality.

"And out of this dung-heap of degeneracy there arises a sect of pessimists who declare that human nature is innately bad; that under conditions of inordinate luxury, when the most exquisite refinements are within the reach of the poorest, conditions of idleness, when all the work of man is done by machinery, it is impossible for virtue to flourish. War, struggle, rigorous conditions make for moral vigour. Peace, security, enervating conditions result in weakness. The blessings that increase of knowledge had heaped on man were in their very plenitude proving a curse. But alas! it was too late. Never could man go back to the old life of virility. There was only one remedy. It was so easy. Even as far back as the benighted nineteenth century philosophers had pointed it out: let every one cease to have children. Let the race become extinct.

"For one hundred years had the promulgation of this doctrine gone on. From their very cradles the children had been trained to the idea that parenthood was shameful, was criminal, was a sin against the race. The highest moral duty of a couple was to die without issue. The doctrine was easy of dissemination; for even to the remotest parts of the earth all men were highly educated; all nations were gathered in world commonwealth with a world language.

"But accidents will happen; and it had taken a century to reduce the population of the world down to a mere handful. For a score of years all children born had been suppressed and now, as far as was known, only a dozen people remained. On a given day these had sworn to partake of a drug that would ensure them a painless and pleasant death. That day was past; there only remained the chief priest to close the account of humanity.

"He too held the drug that meant his release, and as he gazed his last on a depopulated world his heart was full of exultation. He cursed it, this iniquitous earth, where poor, weak man had been flung to serve his martyrdom; its good had been found to be bad; its god a devil. Well, man had outwitted nature; mind had triumphed over matter. Now the end. . . .

"And raising the fatal drug to his lips the last man drained it to the dregs."

Here ended my prologue: now the story.

"A poor woman, feeling the life stir within her, and loving it in spite of their teaching, had crawled away and hid in the depths of a forest. There she had given birth to a man-child; but, knowing that her boy would be killed, this woman-rebel lurked in the forest, living on its fruits and the milk of its deer. Then at last she ventured to leave her child and revisit the world. Lo! she found that the day of the Great Quietus has passed; there was no more human life on the earth. So she returned to the forest and soon she too perished.

"The boy thrived wondrously. His mother had told him that he was the one human being on the planet. He had lived in a cave and fed of the simple fruits of the earth, so that he grew

to be a young god of the wild-wood. But he was curious. He wanted to see the wonderful, wicked world of which his mother had told him so much. So he set out on his travels.

"Like a superb young savage he tramped through Europe. He tamed a horse to bear him; he explored the ruins of great cities—Vienna, Paris, Berlin. In the ivy-grown palaces and the weed-stifled courts of kings he killed lions and tigers; for all the wild animals had escaped from the menageries and had reverted to a savage state. He ached to know something of the histories of these places; but he could not read, and all was meaningless to him.

"He discovered how to use a boat, and in his experiments he was blown across the Channel to Britain. Then one day he lit a bonfire amid the ruins of London. Nothing in the world but ruin, ruin.

"He was as one at the birth of things, for he understood nothing. He knew of fire and knives, but not of wheels. He was a primitive man in a world that has perished of super-civilization. Yet as he cowered by his fire in the centre of Trafalgar Square the vast silence of it all weighted him down, and he felt oh! so lonely. He caressed the dogs he had trained to follow and love him. His mother had been the only human being he had ever seen, and she had died when he was so young. His memory of her was vague, but he could imagine no one different. He knew nothing of sex, only that vast consuming loneliness, those haunting desires he could not understand.

"Then as he sat there brooding, into his life there came the woman—a girl. Where she came from he never knew. Probably like himself she was a deserted child, and like him she, too, was a child of nature, superb, virile, unspoiled. She

had tamed two leopards to defend her, and she was clad in the skin of another. With her leopards she saved his life, just as he was about to fall in battle against a pack of wolves.

"Their meeting was a wondrous idyll; their love an idyll still more wonderful. There in the lovely Kentish woodland they roamed, a new Adam and a new Eve. Then to them in that fresh and glowing world, glad as at the birth of things, a child was born.

"And here we leave them standing on a peak that overlooks a beautiful plain, in the glory of the rising sun. The world rejoices; the sky is full of song; the air is a-thrill with fate. There they stand bathed in that golden glow, and hold aloft their child, the beginners of a new race, a primal pair in a primal world.

"For nature is stronger than man, and the Master of Destiny is invincible."

* * * * * *

I was pounding away at my typewriter one morning, and Anastasia was out on a marketing expedition, when there came a violent knocking at my door. As I opened it Lorrimer almost fell into my arms. He was ghastly and seemed about to faint. Staggering to the nearest chair he buried his head in his hands.

"What's the matter?"

He only groaned.

"Heavens, man! tell me what's wrong."

Suddenly he looked up at me with wild staring eyes.

"Don't touch me, Madden; I'm accursed. Don't you see the brand of Cain on me. I'm a murderer! Oh God! a murderer."

He rocked up and down, sobbing convulsively.

"What have you done?" I cried horrified. "Tell me quick."

"I've killed her," he panted; "I've killed

Lucretia. She's dead now, dead in my studio. I'm on my way to give myself up to the police."

"Killed Lucretia?"

"Yes, yes. I didn't mean to do it. I was mad for revenge. I had her at my mercy. I thought of poor Rougette. Her moans have haunted me night and day. They've almost driven me mad. I can't blot out the memory of that poor, bandaged face. Then when I saw that female devil before me something seemed to snap in my brain. So I've killed her. Now I'm sorry; but it's too late, too late."

"Don't take it so badly, old chap. Nobody ever gets punished for murder in France. They'll bring in a verdict of *crime passionnel*, and you'll be acquitted. But tell me, quick. What's happened?"

He went on in that broken, excited way.

"She did not know we had seen her that night. She came to me with the most brazen effrontery. Pretended to sympathise with Rougette; wanted me to take her back as a model. That was what maddened me, the smiling, damned hypocrisy of her. Oh! devil! devil!"

"Go on, quick; what did you do?"

"I told her I was going to paint a picture of Mazeppa and wanted her to pose for me."

"But Mazeppa wasn't a female."

"She doesn't know that. Well, I posed her in the nude on that dummy horse I have, and I bound her to its back with straps, bound her so strongly she could not move a muscle. She submitted till I had pulled the last buckle, then she got alarmed, but I snapped a gag in her mouth before she could scream."

"Yes, yes, and then?"

Lorrimer drew a long, shuddering breath.

"And then, Madden, I—I *varnished* her."

"Varnished her?"

"Yes. You see I read it in *Pithy Paragraphs*, an advertisement for Silkoline Soap. It began: 'No person covered with a coating of varnish can live

for more than half an hour.' That gave me the idea. It closes all the pores, you see. Well, there she was at my mercy. There was a pot of shellac varnish handy. In a few minutes it was done. From toe to top I varnished her. And now . . ."

"Good God! How long ago?"

"I've come straight here."

"Wait, man; perhaps it's not too late yet. Perhaps—stay here till I get back."

I leapt down the stairs; caught a taxi that was passing, shouted the number of the house and street, adding that it was a matter of life and death; leaped out before the taxi came to a stand; called to the *concierge* to follow me, and burst into Lorrimer's studio. Not a moment too soon. The girl was in a dead faint, and it seemed as if every breath would be her last. In feverish haste I unbuckled her and rolled her in some sheets; then, carrying her downstairs, we lifted her into the taxi.

"The baths!" I cried to the chauffeur. "The baths behind the Closerie de Lilas. And hurry, for Heaven's sake! A life's at stake."

In a few minutes we were there, and I had the girl, who had now recovered consciousness, in a hot bath. Then for an hour of throbbing suspense, with aching muscles and dripping brows I fought for her life. As valiantly as ever hero fought with sword and shield I fought with soap and soda. In the end I triumphed. Her skin was considerably damaged, but Lucretia was saved.

CHAPTER VI

THE SHADOW OF SUCCESS

I WAS killing my chief priest in a blaze of glory when Anastasia invaded the room that between meals is called my *bureau*, at meals the *salle-à-manger*, in the evening the *salon*.

"Don't speak to me," I cried; "I'm at a critical point."

With which I ran my fingers through my hair, took hold of my teeming skull with both hands, and glared fiercely at the blank sheet of paper in my typewriter. With a look almost of awe the wife of the great author tip-toed out again.

About an hour after, having duly been delivered of my great thought, I rejoined her. "What is it?" I asked kindly.

"Oh, darleen, I have letter from my muzzaire. She want us have dinner on Sunday. What must I say?"

"Say yes, of course. The old lady wants to give us her consent and her blessing. Incidentally, a handsome *dot* for you. Shouldn't wonder if she'd taken a shine to me after all."

"Anyone take shine to such a lovely sing like you, darleen; but I don't know about my muzzaire. Well, I write and tell her we come. Oh, and anuzzer sing, I have seen Rougette this morning. She look so happy. She have come out of the *hôpital*, and she tell me she get married with Monsieur Lorrimer, July. You nevaire knew she have been burn. It is all down her neck and shoulder. You cannot see."

"I'm so glad. They say beauty is only skin deep, but it's deep enough to change the destiny

of nations. Who would not rather be born beautiful than good? Why was I not born beautiful."

"You are, darleen. You are just beautiful, and what is better, you are great writer."

(I'm afraid Anastasia sees me with the eyes of posterity.)

"Well now," I went on, "I must try and bring off that triangular marriage scheme of mine. We'll fix it all up with my *belle-mère* on Sunday, and in the meantime I'll go out and see the others."

So I set forth in high spirits. Everything was going beautifully it seemed; and when a few moments later I happened on Monsieur Bébérose issuing from his apartment, I beamed on him, and he beamed in return. He was dressed with more care than usual; a hemispherical figure in a frock coat and tall hat. He was anxiously trying to get a new pair of lavender kid gloves on his podgy hands without splitting them, and the imperial that gave distinction to his series of crisp chins had been trimmed and brilliantined. Plainly Monsieur Bébérose had dressed for no ordinary occasion, and chaffingly I told him so.

"Ah, no! Ah, no!" he admitted coyly. "I go to give a *déjeûner* to my future *belle-mère* at the Café Anglais."

"Ha! Who is it? Juliette or Lucille?"

"Oh, neither," he said, with the archness of a baby elephant. "It is a new one. I think I will be satisfied this time."

"Is she a widow?"

"No; but her mother is; and an old friend of mine."

"Is she pretty?"

"Pretty; only twenty and with some money."

"Ah! young, charming and with a comfortable *dot;* what could be more delightful? Allow me to congratulate you, my friend. How you must dream of her!"

"Truly, yes; day and night. She is adorable. She melts in the mouth."

"What a lucky dog you are! I'm dying to see her."

"But I have not seen her myself yet. I have just seen the mother. Ah! I will have that pleasure in a few days though. Then it is she return from the friend with whom she is visiting."

"Well, I wish you luck. I hope your troubles are at an end."

How pleasant it was, I thought, to see all these wild creatures of the ranges being rounded up into the blissful corral of matrimony! How comforting, after one's own feathers have been trimmed, to see others joining the ranks of the wing-clipped! Love should not be represented as a rosy Cupid, but as a red-jowled recruiting sergeant. True, I have one of the best wives in the world; yet, what man is there, who, if he has ever roved the Barbary coasts of Philander Land, does not once in a while sigh for the old freedom? Marriage is a constraint to be good, against which the best of us feel moments of faint, futile rebellion.

Sometimes I wished that Anastasia was not so desperately practical. She seems to consider that I am a species of great child, and must be looked after accordingly. I am an ardent suffragist; I have always advocated the rights of woman; I have always believed in her higher destiny; I scoff at the idea that woman's sphere is the home, and desire to see her marching shoulder to shoulder with man in the ranks of progress. Yet, alas! I cannot make a convert of Anastasia.

Often I have tried to interest her in the burning question; to inspire in her a sense of having a mission, of being oppressed; but Anastasia only laughs softly. She seems to have the ridiculous and old-fashioned idea that her duty is to make me happy, to surround me with comfortable routine, to remove from my

daily path all irritating and distracting protuberances. I have left, with elaborate carelessness, on her kitchen table enough feminist literature to convert a dozen women. But Anastasia only rearranges it neatly, props an open cook-book against it, and studies some new recipé for stuffing duck.

"Ah, no," she would say. "I must not waste my time reading. That is not serious of me. I have my *ménage*, my marketing, my sewing—oh, so much to do! If I threw away my time reading, my Lovely One might have holes in his socks; and just think what a shame that would be for me!"

Yes, it is sad to relate, but I believe if I had offered her the choice between a new hat and the vote she would take the hat.

How often have I wished she had more individuality! Her idea seems to be to mould her nature to mine, so that every day she becomes more like a faithful shadow. How anxiously she watches me as I eat my soup, so afraid it may not be to my taste! How cheerful, how patient, how eager to please she is. Oh, for a flare of temper sometimes, a sign of spirit, something to show that she is a woman of character, of originality! But no. Her duty, as she conceives it, is to minister to my material comfort, to see that I enjoy my food, to make me wrap up sufficiently. Yet in these things she is rather tyrannical, insisting on my coming home to my meals at the hour I have decided on, emphatic that I change my socks at least twice a week, indignant if I brush my hair after putting on my coat. However, she keeps my things in beautiful order, and although I feel at times that she is a little exacting I yield with good grace. After all, one ought to consider one's wife sometimes.

On the other hand, I have insisted on some concessions on her part that are revolutionary to the French mind—that of sleeping with the window open, for instance. I over-ruled her objection that

the snow and rain entering during the night spoiled her *parquet*. She keeps it beautifully polished, by the way, and claims that the shining of it every day gives her enough exercise without the Swedish gymnastics I insist on her taking under my direction. But I am so anxious she should keep slim and lissom, and the exercises are certainly effective.

But another matter is beginning to occupy my mind and to give me a strange mixture of satisfaction and regret. This is the apparent success of *Tom, Dick and Harry*. About a month ago I received my six presentation copies. MacWaddy & Wedge had done their work well. The cover was stirring in the extreme. An American publicity man on his probation had seized on it as a medium for his first efforts. It was advertised in the weekly, and even in the daily papers ; a royal princess was announced as having included it in her library, and more or less picturesque paragraphs about the author began to go the round of the Press. The imaginative efforts of the publicity man were not stultified by any sordid knowledge of his subject.

Then Press clippings began to come in. A great many of these were a repetition of the puff on the paper wrapper, which I had written myself, and therefore were favourable. But the reviewers who read the books they review did not let me down so easily. *The Times* was tolerant ; *The Academy* acidulous ; *The Spectator* severe. On the whole, however, my *début* was decidedly successful. Nearly all concluded by saying that " despite its obvious faults, the faults of a beginner, its crudeness, its obviousness, its thinness of character-drawing, this first book of Silenus Starset showed more than the average promise, and his future work should be looked forward to with some expectation."

I gave copies to Helstern and Lorrimer, and they were both enthusiastic in that tolerant way one's friends have of applauding one's performances.

"For a first novel, it's wonderful," said the sculptor.

"You're a marvel for a beginner," said the artist.

These back-handed compliments rather discounted my pleasure. On the other hand, Anastasia, who read it with rapture, thought it the most wonderful production since *Les Misérables*. She hugged and treasured it as if it were something rarely precious, and verily I believe if she had been asked to choose between it and the Bible she would have chosen *Tom, Dick and Harry*.

Yes, it had all the appearance of success, and yet I was, in a way, disappointed. It was the equal of my other work—no better, no worse. It had the same fresh, impetuous spirit, the same wheedling, human quality, the same light-hearted ingenuity. It had the points that made for popularity; yet I had hoped to strike a truer note. I had a fatal faculty for success. I began to fear that I was doomed irrevocably to be a best-sellermonger.

Well, it must be as the public willed. I could only write in the way that was natural to me. Still I hoped that in *The Great Quietus* I would show that I could aspire to better things. There were opportunities in it for idyllic description, for the display of imagination. Yes, I would try to rise to this new occasion.

So I was deep in the book the following Sunday morning when Anastasia reminded me it was the day we had promised to dine with her mother. The old lady, she said, had asked her to go in the afternoon and help to prepare dinner. Would I follow about six in the evening? I promised, glad to get the extra time on my manuscript.

About six, then, I looked up from my work; suddenly remembered the important engagement, and rushed on my best garments. I called a taxi and told the chauffeur to stop at the beginning of

the street. (Anastasia, if she saw me, would give me a lecture on extravagance.)

The house was in the rue Montgolfier, up five flights. I knocked and Anastasia answered the door. She looked as if she had been crying. There was a sound of conversation from an interior room, where I saw a table set for dinner, with the red checked table cloth beloved of the *bourgeois*.

"What's the matter?" I whispered.

"Oh, I'm so glad you come. Wat you sink she want, that bad muzzaire of me? She ask another man here and she want that I leave you and marry him. He is quite rich, and she say she geeve me twenty tousand francs for *dot*. All afternoon she *discute* with me. She tell me I always am poor wiz you, and nevaire have much *confort*. And then she say you are stranger and some day you leeve me. She tell me the uzzer man geeve me automobile and I will be very grand. And what you sink? When I say no, no, no, I nevaire, nevaire leeve you, she say she geeve you two tousand francs and you geeve me up like nothing. Oh, I 'ave awful, awful time."

"I don't care two pins for your mother," I said. "But where's the other party to this arrangement? Where's the damned Frenchman? I'm going to knock his face in."

Suddenly Madame Guinoval appeared, wearing a black satin robe that crackled on her and threatened to burst with every movement of her swelling muscles. The slightly moustached mouth was grim as a closed trap, and the red face was flushed and angry looking.

I was furious, but I tried to be calm.

"Madame," I said, "Anastasia has just told me all. You are her mother, so I do not express my opinion of you, but," I added in a voice of thunder, "where is the sacred pig who wants to steal away my wife?"

There was a movement of alarm from the dining-room.

"Because here's where I show," I went on, "that an American is equal to two Frenchmen. Let me get at the brute."

Anastasia clung to me, begging me to be calm, but Madame Guinoval was haughtily intrepid.

"Hegesippe! Hegesippe!" she cried, "come out and show this *coquin* you are a brave man."

There was no alacrity on the part of Hegesippe, so the lady entered and fairly boosted him to the front. I stared; I gasped; my hands dropped; for the suitor looking very much alarmed indeed, was little Monsieur Bébérose.

"Well," I said, "you're a fine man to try and steal a friend's wife."

It was now the turn of Anastasia and Madame Guinoval to gasp, for Monsieur Bébérose burst away from the grasp of the latter and rushing to me began to stammer a flood of apologies. He was so sorry; he had not known how things were; he had been deceived. "It was *that* woman had deceived him," he said dramatically, pointing to Madame Guineval.

"That woman" retorted by a terrible calm, a calm more menacing than any storm, a calm pregnant with withering contempt.

"Out of my house," she said at last; "out, out, you *sale goujat!*" And Monsieur Bébérose needed no second bidding. He grabbed his hat from the rack and his cane from the stand and vanished. Then the virago turned to us. Going into the bedroom she brought Anastasia's coat and hat. She ignored me utterly.

"Do you still," she said, "intend to remain with this man?"

Anastasia nodded a determined head, at which the mother threw the coat and hat at her feet.

"Then go, and never let me see your face again. Never will I give my consent to your marriage

in France. May my tongue wither if I ever give it."

"Put on your hat outside," I said to Anastasia, and pushed her out. Then I turned to the woman.

"It does not matter," I hissed. "You're a devil. You've tried to play a dirty game, but it won't do. And now listen to me."

Then I took a step towards her and adopted the manner of a stage villain. My face was apparently convulsed with rage, and my raised lips showed my teeth in a vicious snarl. It was most effective. I vow the woman shrank back a moment.

"I'll pay you out, you harridan. I'll make you smart for this. Nobody ever did me a bad turn but what I did them a worse. Beware, madame, beware. I will have my revenge."

I slammed the door dramatically in her face. Then I laughed loud and long.

"I say! it's all awfully funny, Little Thing. Now let's go and have some dinner in place of the one we should have had with your mother."

When we got home that night, another matter claimed my attention. On opening *The Bookman*, which had arrived that morning, I found therein a well-displayed advertisement of *Tom, Dick and Harry*. There was half a column of press extracts carefully culled and pruned, the evil of them having in some inexplicable way evaporated. But, oh wonderful fact that made me scratch my head thoughtfully! in bracketed italics was the announcement: Seventh Impression. There was no guessing how many copies went to an impression. If the publishers were boasting up the number of editions by printing only five hundred copies at a time this did not mean much. But it was hardly likely. In any case it did not look as if MacWaddy & Wedge were losing money over their venture.

The result was that next morning I read over my contract with them. Thank goodness! I still

had the American rights; so by the first post I wrote to Widgeon & Co., the literary agents, putting the matter in their hands. There was a reply by return saying that there were several representatives of American firms in London at that time, and that they would get in touch with them without delay.

The following day there came a telegram: "Messrs. Liverwood & Son offer to publish book on fifteen per cent. royalty basis. Will we accept. Widgeon."

I immediately wired back: "Accept for immediate publication."

Well, that was off my mind anyway. A few days after, I got a letter from MacWaddy & Wedge saying that they hoped to have a new book from me soon. What were the prospects, they wanted to know, of me being able to let them have it for their autumn lists? In which case they would begin an advertising campaign right away. I wrote back that my affairs were now in the hands of Widgeon & Co. and that all business would be done through them.

A week went past. Every day I had new proof that *Tom, Dick and Harry* was going well. Then one morning I had a letter from my agents. They had, they said, an opportunity to place a good serial. Would I send them as much of my new book as I had finished and give a synopsis of the rest. I did so, and in three weeks' time they wrote again to say that the American magazine *Uplift* had bought the serial rights for a thousand dollars.

That, too, was as satisfactory as it was unexpected. It was like finding the money. Once more I seemed to have entered on the avenue of success that seemed to open up before me in spite of myself. From now on, there would be nothing but monotonous vistas of smooth going. I was doomed to popular applause. Once more would I leap into the lists as a writer of best-sellers. So strongly had I the gift of interesting

narrative that I could win half a dozen new reputations; of that I felt sure.

Yes, I had succeeded—no, I mean I had failed; failed by these later lights that Paris had kindled within me. Here, amid art that is eternal, art that means sacrifice, surrender, renunciation, I had learned to despise that work which merely serves the caprice of an hour. I had come to crave form, to strive for style. Yet what can one do? My efforts for art's sake were artificial and stilted; it was only when I had a story to tell that I became entirely pleasing. Well, let me take my own measure. I would always be a bagman of letters. In that great division of scribes into sheep and goats I would never be other than a bleating and incorrigible goat.

CHAPTER VII

THE FATE OF FAME

MADAME SERAPHINE had spoiled my plan of a triple marriage, but there was nothing to prevent a double one. It took place one midsummer morning in the Mairie, rue Grenelle. On the strength of my thousand dollars from the *Uplift* people, I offered to pay all expenses.

In the great gloomy chamber of the Mairie we occupied one of a series of benches. Frosine and Rougette were looking radiant, and Helstern and Lorrimer comported themselves as if getting married was part of their daily routine. I was the only person at all excited.

On the other benches were other bridal parties, a bridal party to a bench. On a platform facing us sat a tall man with an Assyrian beard. He wore evening dress traversed by a tricoloured sash. He took each couple in turn, looking down on them with no more interest than if they had been earwigs. Then he mumbled into his beard for about two minutes; finally he cleared his throat and for the first time we heard him distinctly: "The ceremony is terminated."

After he had spoken this phrase about a dozen times our turn came. Joyfully I pushed forward my candidates, and in a few minutes they were admitted into the matrimonial fold according to the law of France.

Then I whirled them off to Marguery's, where we had a lunch of uproarious jollity, punctuated with kisses, compliments and toasts. They would fain have lingered, but I whisked them off once more to the Place Denfort Rochereau, where on every Saturday afternoon assembles the crowd of tourists that

descends into the darkness of the Catacombs. I bought candles for all, showed my permit to the door-keeper, and we joined the long procession of candle-bearing cosmopolitans. The three women were delighted. It seemed so original for a Parisian to visit the Catacombs of Paris.

So for miles we followed these weird galleries hewn from the living rock and lined with the bones of their million dead. As we walked in single file the flickering candles gruesomely lit up the brown walls where the shank bones were piled with such meticulous neatness, knob dove-tailing into hollow, and the whole face of them decorated with fantastic frescoes of thousands of skulls. And behind these cordwood-like piles were vast heaps of indistinguishable débris, the bones of that mediæval myriad gutted from the graveyards when the great city had to have more room.

We were all emerging from a side-gallery when I pulled Anastasia back; for there, at the head of a party of Cook's tourists, whom should I see but her enemy, O'Flather. Luckily he did not notice her and she did not recognise him, so I held my tongue. But I thought:

"Ah, now if I were a writer of fantastic fiction, instead of a recorder of feeble fact, what a chance I should have here! Could I not in some way have left us in the darkness, all three together, our candles lost down one of those charnel pits? Then imagine a battle in the dark between him and me, with the girl insensible between us. There in the black bowels of Paris how we smash at one another with naked femurs in our hands! How the bones and dust of death come toppling down on us! How, finally, I bowl him over with a chance-hurled skull. Then imagine how I wander there in the darkness with the girl in my arms! How we starve and nearly go mad! And how at last, on the following Saturday the next batch of tourists find us lying insensible

at the foot of the great stairs!" As I thought of these things, by an absent-minded movement, I raised my candle. There was a fierce, frizzling noise. It was the feathers on the hat of the stout dame in front. They shrunk in a moment down to three weedy quills. Poor lady! she did not know, and I—I confess it with shame—had not the moral courage to tell her.

No sooner had we got into the open air again than I whirled my party off again to Montmartre. There was a matinée at the Grand Guignol, and I had taken seats in the low gallery. The pieces were more thrilling than usual, and the three women screamed ecstatically

For example: A father and son are left in charge of a solitary lighthouse. (You see the living-room of the lighthouse; you hear the howling of the storm.)

Then the son confesses to the father that he has been bitten by a rabid dog and that he feels the virus in his veins. He implores the father to kill him, but the old man refuses. The storm increases.

The son begins to go mad. He freezes, he burns, he raves, he weeps. Night is falling. It is time to light the lamps. The old man goes to do so; but the son is trying to kill himself, and the father has to wrestle with him. The hoarse horn of a ship is heard in the growing storm.

There is no time to lose. The ship is close at hand, rushing on the rocks. The old man leaves his son and springs to the rope-ladder leading to the lights. He gets up it almost to the top, but the son is after him. With the blood-curdling snarl of a mad animal he seizes his father by the leg and buries his teeth in it. The old man kicks out, and the son, loosing his hold, tumbles crashing to the stage below. The curtain falls on the spectacle of the old man crouching over the dead body of his boy, and the doomed ship crashing on the rocks.

This was one of the most cheerful pieces we saw, so that when we issued forth again we were all in

excellent frame of mind for an *apéritif* at the Moulin Rouge. We had dinner at the Abbaye, and finished up by visiting those bizarre cabarets, Hell, Heaven, and Annihilation.

"It's been the lovely day you've arranged for us," said Lorrimer as we broke up. "But one thing you missed to make it complete. Could you not have contrived a visit to the Morgue?"

"I tried," I admitted mournfully, "but they're not issuing permits any more." However, I agreed with him; it had been one of the loveliest days I had ever spent.

So Lorrimer and Rougette went off to Brittany, and Helstern and Frosine to Normandy, and it seemed very lonely without them all. Yet the days passed serenely enough in our little apartment in that quiet by-street. I was becoming more and more absorbed in *The Great Quietus*, which already was beginning to show signs of unruliness. My Pegasus, harnessed to imagination, is hard to keep in hand, and I perceived that soon it would take the bit in its teeth. Anastasia was deeply interested in some tapestry she was trying to imitate from a design in the Cluny Museum. Sometimes for hours as we both worked you would not hear a sound in the tiny room.

Then when we were tired of toiling we would go out on, to me, the pleasantest of all the boulevards, Montparnasse. We would walk down as far as the Invalides, and, returning, sit in front of the Dome or the Rotando Café and sip *Dubonnets* while we watched the passing throng. We mixed with the groups of artists and students that thronged the rue de la Grand Chaumiere with its gleaming signs of Croquis schools, where for half a franc one may sketch for three hours some nude damsel with a wrist watch and very dirty feet. Or we spent a tranquil evening in a cinema, halfway down the Boulevard Raspail, whose cherry-coloured light saves the people on the

apartments across the way a considerable sum yearly in gas bills.

Days of simple joys! What a world of difference a few extra francs make. Economy still, but self-respecting economy—not sordid striving to make ends meet. Anastasia would not waste anything. The remains of the *gigot* for dinner appeared as a *ragoût* at lunch. The morning milk left over must serve as the evening soup. Often I groaned in spirit, and suggested a little more recklessness. But no! I must not forget we were poor. We must cut our coat according to our cloth.

It was useless to try and change her. She was of that race of born house-wives who have made France the rich nation it is to-day. Early in the morning see their kimono-clad arms protruded from their windows to shake the energetic duster; a little later see them seated, trim and smiling, at the cash-desks in their husbands' shops. Centuries of prudence are in their veins; industry is to them a religion, and the instinct of thrift is almost tyrannical. I know one of them who insisted on her daughter marrying an Englishman because she had sent her to a school in Brighton for a year, and did not want to see the money wasted.

So, recognising the genius of the race, I submitted meekly to Anastasia's sense of economy. Her greatest delight was to spend the afternoon in the great Magasins that lie behind the Opera. She would put in three hours there, walking them from end to end, turning over enormous quantities of stuff which she would throw aside in the contemptuous way of the born shopper, swooping hawk-like, pressing intrepidly through crowds that appalled me, breathing air that gave me a headache, and in the end returning with six sous of riband, declaring that she had had a glorious day.

Often I wonder how a woman who is tired if she walks a mile in the open air can walk ten in a close, heated department store without fatigue. As I

walk in the street Anastasia lags hopelessly in the rear, but the moment we enter the Louvre or the Bon Marché there is a mighty change. The enthusiasm of the bargain stalker gleams in her eyes; she bcomes alert, a creature of fierce and predatory activity. It is I who am helpless, now, I who try in vain to keep up, as in some marvellous way she threads in and out that packed mob of sister bargain-stalkers. She is still fresh when I am ready to drop with exhaustion, and she knows the Galerie and the Printemps as well as I know my pocket. Her only weakness is for special bargains. How often has she bought fancy boxes of notepaper and envelopes, just because they were too cheap to resist. I have enough rose and cream stationery to last me the balance of my life. I believe she buys them for the sake of the box.

As the days went on I found myself becoming more and more in love with the lotus of Bohemia. I began to dread making an engagement; it weighed on me like a burden. I wanted to be free, free to do what I liked every moment of my time. An engagement was a constraint. The chances were that when the time came I did not feel in a sociable mood. Yet I would have to take part in conversation that did not interest me; I would have to adapt my thoughts to the thoughts of others. So Society became to me a form of spiritual tyranny, a state where I could not be myself, but had to play the complacent ape among people who were often uncongenial.

The fact of the matter was, I was overworking myself, living again that strange intense life of the maker of books, heedless of the outside world, and more and more vividly intent on the glowing world of my dreams When I felt the force flag within me I would stimulate myself anew with draughts of strong black coffee. More and more was I the martyr to my moods, a prey to strange enthusiasms, strange depressions.

For hours I would sit tense over my typewriter, all nerves and desire ; now attacking it in a frenzy of whirling phrases, now wrestling with the god of scribes for a few feeble fumbling words. Words—how I loved them ! What a glory it was to twist and torture them, to marshal and command them, to work them like jewels into the gleaming fabric of a story !

As I walked the streets I had moments of wonderful exaltation ; moments when my brain would be full of strange gleams and shadows. I would know the joy that is theirs who feel for a moment the inner spirit of things. I would have a reeling sense of intoxication as the Right Word shot into my consciousness. As I walked, the ground beneath my feet would seem billowy, the world around strangely, deliciously unreal, and the people would take on a new and marvellous aspect. So light I felt, that I imagined my feet must have some prehensible quality preventing me flying upward.

Particularly I favoured walking in an evening of soft-falling rain. It turned the boulevards into avenues of delight. The pavements were of beaten gold ; down streets that were like plaques of silver shot ruby lights of taxi-cabs ; the vivid leaves on the trees were clustered jewels. Perhaps I would see two people descending from a shining carriage, the lady in exquisite gown, held up to show silk-stockinged ankles, the man in evening dress. " They are going to dinner," I would say ; " to force themselves to be agreeable for three hours ; to eat much rich, unnecessary food. Ah ! how much better to be one's own self and to walk and dream in the still, soft rain."

So on I would go, and the world would become like a shadow beside the glow of my imagination. I would think of my work, thrill at its drama, chuckle over its humour, choke at its pathos. I would talk aloud my dialogues till people stared at me, even in Paris, this city of privileged eccentricity. I was

more absent-minded than ever, and my nerves were often on edge. My manner became spasmodic, my temper uncertain. I avoided my friends, took almost no notice of Anastasia; in short, I was agonising in the travail, of, alas! best-seller birth.

For my story had once more got out of hand. It was writing itself. I could not check it. I would rattle off page after page till the old typewriter seemed to curse me and my frenzy. Then, if perchance I was sitting mute and miserable before it, a few cups of that hot, black coffee till my heart began to thump, and I would be at it once more. I wanted to get it finished, to rid my mind of it, to send it away so that I would never see it again.

At last with a great spurt of effort I again wrote the sweetest words of all—The End. I leaned back with a vast sigh: "Thank God, I can rest now."

Then I looked at the manuscript sadly.

"Another of them. I've no doubt it will sell in the tens of thousands. It will be a success; yet what a failure! What a chance I had to make art of it! What poetry! What romance! And I have sacrificed them for what?—adventure, exciting narrative, melodrama. I had to invent a villain, an educated super-ape who makes things hum. But I couldn't help it. It was just the way it came to me and I could do no other.

"Oh, cursed Fate! I am doomed to success. Like a Nemesis it pursues me. If I could only achieve one glorious failure how happy I would be! But, no. I am fated to become a writer with a vogue, a bloated bond-clipper.

"Alas! No more the joy of the struggle, the hope, the despair. Farewell, garrets and crusts! Farewell, lighthearted poverty! Farewell, the gay, hard life! Bohemia, Paris, Youth—farewell!"

And as I gazed at the manuscript that was to make for me a barrel of money there never was more miserable scribe than I.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MANUFACTURE OF A VILLAIN

"HERE'S crime," I said darkly, as I touched glasses with O'Flather.

The man with the bull-dog face and the brindled hair knotched his sandy eyebrows in interrogation.

"Down with the police," I went on, taking a gloomy gulp of grenadine.

"Wot d'ye mean?" said my boon companion, suspending the operation of a syphon to regard me suspiciously.

"O'Flather"—I lowered my voice to a mysterious whisper—"have you never longed to revel in violence and blood? Have you never longed to be a villain?"

"Can't say as I have," said O'Flather, somewhat relieved, proceeding to sample the brandy and soda I had ordered for him.

"Is there no one you hate?" I suggested, "hate with a deadly hatred. No one you wish to be revenged on, terribly revenged on?"

"Can't say as there is," said the fat man thoughtfully. "But wait; yes, by the blasting blazes, there's the skirt wot put my show on the blink. I'd give a month in chokey to get even with her."

"What would you do, if you met her?" I demanded.

"Wot would I do," he snarled, and his cod-mouth opened to show those teeth like copper and verdigris clenched in venomous hate; "I'd do her up, that's wot I would do." He banged his big, fat fist down on the table. "I'd pound her face in. I'd beat her to a jelly. I'd leave about as much life in her as a sick fly."

"Did you never find out where she went?" I asked.

"Nary a trace," he said vindictively. "I hiked it over here to see if I could get on her tracks. They say if you wait long enough by the Caffay-day-la-Pay corner all the folks you've ever known will come along some day. Well, I've waited round there doing the guide business, but nary a trace."

"What would you say if I told you where she is?"

"I should say you was a good pal."

"Well, then, O'Flather, I saw her only this morning."

"The blazes! Tell me where an' I'll start after her right now."

"Easy on, my lad. Don't get excited. Let's talk the matter over coolly. I'm sure it's the girl I saw in the doorway of your Exhibition that night. It struck me as so odd I inquired her name. Let me see; it was Guin . . . Guin . . . Ah! Guinoval."

"By Christmas, that's her; that's her; curse her. Where is she?"

"Wait a bit; wait a bit, O'Flather. Revenge is a beautiful thing. I believe in it. If a man hits you hit him back, only harder. But while I approve your motive, I deprecate your method. It's too primitive, my dear man, too brutally primitive."

"Wot d'ye mean? D'ye think it's too much to beat her up after the dirty trick she played me?"

"Keep cool, O'Flather. Have a little imagination. There are other ways that you could hurt her far more than by resorting to crude violence. She's a very honest girl, I believe. Sets a great deal on her reputation. Well then, instead of striking at the girl, strike at her reputation."

"But how? Wotter you getting at?"

"It's simple enough. These days the popular form of villainy is White Slavery. Become a White Slaver. What's to prevent you abducting

the girl, having her taken to that Establishment you so strenuously represent—your Crystal Palace? Once within those doors it's pretty hard for her to get out again. You have her at your mercy and the Institution ought to pay you handsomely."

"But it's a risky business. You know them French judges have no mercy on a foreigner. If I was caught I'd get it in the neck."

"Don't do the actual abduction yourself. You're too fat and too conspicuous to do the job yourself. Besides, she knows you. Get three of these bullies that hang around the Crystal Palace to do it for you. You wait there till they come with the girl."

"But how would they know her?"

"That's true. Well, I'll tell you what I'll do, O'Flather, being a bit of a villain myself, and ready to help a pal; I'll go with your cadets, or whatever they are, and point out the girl. You engage your men. We'll all go down in a taxi. The chauffeur must understand that he's to ask no questions. When the girl comes along I point her out. Gaston rushes in with a chloroformed rag. Alphonse and Achille grab her arms. Presto! in a moment she's in the taxi. In ten minutes she's in your Crystal Palace. Is it not easy?"

"Seems so," he said thoughtfully. "I think I could get the men for to-night. Won't two do? Sure it needs three?"

"Yes," I said thoughtfully; "it might be better even with four, but I think three will do. I've found that she goes to work every morning about two o'clock, and takes the same road always. It's dark then, and the road's almost deserted. I can be at the Place de l'Opera at half-past one, when you can meet me with your men and a taxi. How will that do?"

"Right O! I'll be there. To-night then. Half-past one. And say! tell me before you go whereabouts this abduction business is going to be done.

It don't matter to me, but you might be a little more confidential. Where's she working ? "

" She's working in the *Halles* and she goes by the name of Seraphine Guinoval."

* * * * * *

The night was come, and though I arrived punctually at the rendezvous, O'Flather and his myrmidons were there before me. The fat man was tremendously excited and fearfully nervous. His hand shook so that he spoiled two cigarettes before he got one rolled decently. He sank his voice to a hoarse whisper.

His accomplices were of the usual type of *souteneurs* —little, dark, dapperly-dressed men with lantern-jawed faces, small black moustaches and cigarettes in their cynical mouths. Their manner was sullenly cool and contemptuous—a contempt that seemed to extend to their patron. There was no time to lose. We all bundled into the waiting taxi.

" Good luck to ye," said O'Flather. " I'll be off now and wait. The boys know where to take the jade. Once they get her into the taxi the rest is easy. I'll be waiting there to give her the glad hand, and extend, so to say, the hospitality of the mansion. You're sure you know where to drop on her ? "

" Sure. She's as regular as clock-work, passing the same corner and always alone. Rely on that part of it. The rest lies with your satellites and with you."

" All right," he chuckled malevolently. " The thing's as good as done. So long now. See you to-morrow same place."

The taxi darted off, and the last I saw of my villain was his immense bull-dog face lividly glowering in the upturned fur collar of his coat, and his ham-like hand waved in farewell.

We were embarked on the venture now, and even I felt a thrill as I looked at the dark, dissolute faces

of the men by my side. At that moment the affair began to seem far more serious than I had bargained for, and I almost wished myself out of it. But it was too late to turn back. I must play my part in the plot.

I had selected a narrow pavement and a dark doorway as the scene of operations. It would be very easy for three men lurking there to rush any passer-by into a taxi at the edge of the pavement without attracting attention. As I explained, I could see my three braves agreed with me. They shrugged their shoulders.

"*Parbleu!* It's too easy," they said, and retiring into the doorway they lit fresh cigarettes.

How slowly the time seemed to pass! I paced up and down the pavement anxiously. Several times I felt like bolting. The false beard I had donned was so uncomfortable; and, after all, I began to think, it was rather tough on my *belle-mère*. There in the darkened doorway I could see the glow of three cigarettes, and I could imagine the contemptuous sneering eyes behind them. Hunching forward, the chauffeur seemed asleep. The street was silent, dark, deserted. Then suddenly I heard a step . . . it was her.

Yes, there was no doubt. Passing under a distant lamp I had a convincing glimpse of her. I could not mistake that massive figure waddling along in the black serge costume of the market women, with the black shawl over her shoulders, the black umbrella in the hand. She was hatless too, and carried a satchel. All this I saw in a vivid moment ere I turned to my bullies and whispered huskily:

"Ready there, boys! She comes."

My excitement seemed to communicate itself to them. Their cigarettes dropped, and Alphonse peered out almost nervously.

"*Sapristi!* that's her?" he exclaimed hoarsely. "You are sure, monsieur?"

" Yes, yes ; sure, sure. She's a *large* girl."

He shrugged his shoulders as if to say : " Monsieur, our patron, he has a droll taste among the women, *par exemple.* But that is not our affair. Steady there Gaston and Achille ! Get ready for the spring."

The three men were tense and *couchant ;* the chauffeur snored steadily ; the unsuspecting footsteps drew nearer and nearer. Crossing the street, I stood in the shadow on the other side.

What happened in the next half-minute I can only surmise. I saw three dark shadows launch themselves on another shadow. I heard a scream of surprise that was instantly choked by a hairy masculine hand. I heard another hoarse yell as a pair of strong teeth met in that masculine hand. I heard volleys of fierce profane Gallic expletives, grunts, groans, yelps of pain and the unmistakable whacking of an umbrella. Evidently my desperadoes weren't having it all their own way. The bigger shadow seemed to be holding the smaller ones at bay, striking with whirling blows at them every time they tried to rush in. The smaller shadows seemed to be less and less inclined to rush in ; each was evidently nursing some sore and grievous hurt, and the joy of battle did not glow in them. There is no doubt they would have retired discomfited had not their doughty antagonist suddenly tripped and fallen with a resounding thump backwards. Then with a mutual yell of triumph they all knelt on her chest.

She was down now, but not defeated. Still she fought from the ground, but their united weight was too much for her. She fell exhausted. Then with main strength they hauled, pushed, lifted her into the taxi, and piling in after her, panting and bleeding from a score of wounds, they sat on her as fearfully as one might sit on an exhausted wild cat. The taxi glided away, and I saw them no more.

As to the sequel, I found it all in the columns of

the *Matin* two mornings after. Herewith is a general translation :

" Madame Seraphine Guinoval is a buxom brunette who carries on a flourishing business in Les Halles. To look at her no one would suspect her of inspiring an ardent and reckless passion ; yet early yesterday morning Madame Guinoval was the victim of an abduction such as might have occurred in the pages of romance.

" It was while she was going to her work in the very early morning that the too fascinating fair one was set upon by three young apaches and conveyed to a well-known temple of Venus. Madame Guinoval appears to have given a good account of herself, judging from the condition of her assailants as they confronted the magistrate this morning. All three suffer from bites, one received as he sat on the lady's head ; their faces are scratched as by a vigorous young cougar ; two have eyes in mourning, while each claims to have received severe bodily injuries. A more sorry trio of kidnappers never was seen.

" But their plight is nothing to that of the instigator of the plot—a certain Irish-American, known as the Colonel Offlazaire, a well-known *boulevardier*. He, it seems, became so infatuated with the charms of the fair *Marchande d'escargots* that with the impetuous gallantry of his race he was determined to possess her at all costs. Alas ! luckless, lovelorn swain ! He is now being patched up in the hospital.

" The real trouble began, it seems, when they got the Guinoval safely within that pension for young ladies kept by Madame Lebrun on the rue Montmartre. They put her in a dark room and turned the key in the door. Then to her entered the Chevalier Offlazaire, who locked the door and turned on the light. It is then

supposed that he pressed his attentions too ardently on the unwilling fair one, for presently were heard sounds of commotion from behind the closed door, a man's voice pleading for mercy, and the smashing of furniture. So fierce, indeed, did the turmoil become that presently the proprietress of the establishment, supported by a bodyguard of her fair pensionnaires, felt constrained to open the door with her private key.

"Not a moment too soon! For the unfortunate Colonel was already *hors de combat*, while over him, the personification of outraged virtue, poised the amazonian Seraphine, whirling a chair around her head in a berserker rage. Terrified, Madame Lebrun, and her protegées fled screaming; then the infuriated lady of the *Halles* proceeded to reduce the establishment to ruins. Very little that was breakable escaped that flail-like chair swung by outraged virtue. Particularly did she devote her attention to the room known as the Crystal Palace, where she smashed all the mirrors that compose the walls, and then ended by reducing to ruins the magnificent candelabra. Her frenzy of destruction was only interrupted by the arrival of the police.

"In consequence of the serio-comic character of the affair, and its disastrous effects on those who promoted it, the magistrate was inclined to be lenient. A nominal fine of fifty francs was imposed on each of the three accomplices, while the illustrious O'Flather was fined two hundred francs, and found himself so ridiculously notorious that he departed for pastures new."

(As for Madame Guinoval, I think she enjoyed the whole thing immensely.)

CHAPTER IX

A CHEQUE AND A CHECK

ONE morning I received a cheque for nine hundred dollars from Widgeon & Co.—payment for *The Great Quictus*, now running serially in the *Uplift*. Did I wave it in the air? Did I do a war-dance of delight? No. I looked at it with sober sadness. The struggle was over. Henceforward it was the easy money, the work that brought in ten times its meed of reward. Alas! how I was doomed to prosperity! I banked the cheque with a heavy heart.

Always was it thus. I vowed each book would be my last. I would drop out of the best-seller writing game, take to the country and raise calves. Then, sooner or later the desire would come to leap into the lists once more. There was usually a month's boredom between books, and I would go at it again. "Perhaps," I would say, "I'll be able to write a failure this time."

So, having got *The Great Quietus* off my hands already, I was having this feeling of energy going to waste. One day then, as I walked along the Avenue de la Grande Armée, I happened to stop in front of an automobile agency. There in the window was displayed the neatest ***voiturette*** I had ever seen. It had motor-bicycle wheels, a tiny tonneau for two, an engine strong enough for ordinary touring. It was called the *Baby Mignonne*, and I fell in love with it on the spot.

As I was admiring the dainty midget two American women stopped in front of the window.

"Isn't it just the cutest thing?" said one.

"Isn't it just a perfect darling?" said the other.

Then they passed on, leaving me tingling with

pride at their verdict ; for on the spur of the moment I had made up my mind that this diminutive run-about should belong to me. Ha ! that was it. I was seeking for a new character in which to express my energy. Well, I would become a dashing motorist in a leather cap and goggles, swishing along in my Baby Mignonne. Yet I hesitated a moment.

The price was thirty-eight hundred francs. That would not leave much out of my forty-five. It seemed a little indiscreet in a man who had been fighting the wolf so long to spend the first decent bit of money he made in an automobile ; a man who lived in a garret, whose wardrobe was not any too extensive, and whose wife, that very morning had finished a hat for winter wear with her own hands. Ah ! now I came to think of it, she had looked so pale leaning over her cherry ribands. Now I understood my sudden impulse. It was for *her* I was buying it ; so that I might drive her out ; so that she might get lots of fresh air ; so that the roses might bloom in her cheeks again. With a sense of splendid virtue, I said to the agent : " I'll take it."

Then I halted : " But I don't know how to drive one," I said prudently. " How do I know I can get a chauffeur's certificate ? "

" Ah," said the agent, " that was easy. There was a school for chauffeurs next door, where for a hundred francs they qualified you for the licence."

So I promised the man I would return when I could drive, and made arrangements to begin lessons on the following day.

I returned home full of my new hobby. At all costs I must keep it a secret from her. Her economical soul would rebel at my splendid sacrifice. Then again I wanted the surprise to be a dramatic one. I would tell her one day to meet me at the Place de l'Opéra, and as she lingered, patiently waiting for me to come plodding along on " *train onze*," up I would

dash on my Baby Mignonne. Removing my goggles, I would laugh into her amazed face. Then I would remark in a casual way :

" I thought you might be too tired to walk home, so I brought you round your car. Jump in quickly. We're blocking up the traffic."

So clearly did I see the picture that I chuckled over my coffee and Camembert.

" What make you so amuse ? " she asked curiously.

" Oh, nothing," I said hurriedly. " I was just thinking of a little business I have in hand."

I continued to chuckle throughout the day, and my wife continued to wonder at this change in her husband. (Here let me change for a moment from my view point to hers.) She never pried into his affairs, but nevertheless she watched him curiously. And day by day his conduct was still more puzzling. Although an inveterate late riser, he sprang from bed at half-past seven and dressed quickly. Then after a hurried breakfast he said : " I've got an engagement at nine. Don't wait for me." She did not dare ask him where he was going, but she saw an eager glow in his eyes, a gladness as of one hastening to a tryst.

And when he returned how joyous he was ! With what a hearty appetite he attacked his lunch ! How demonstrative in his affection ! (Wives, when husbands grow demonstrative in their affection, begin to get suspicious.)

She marked, too, his unusual preoccupation. He had something on his mind ; something he was desperately anxious to keep from her. He seemed afraid to meet her eye. She began to be anxious, even afraid.

Next morning he arose at the same time and went off again on his mysterious business. She fretted ; she worried. She knew he was wilful and headstrong ; she knew he would always be enigma to her ; she

loved him for that very quality of aloofness; yet over all she loved him because of his caprice, because some day she dreaded she might lose him. He had moods she feared, subtle, harsh moods; then again he was helpless and simple as a child.

Yes, she had never been able to fathom his whimsical changes, and he certainly was greatly excited about this affair. It could not be that he was incubating a new novel, for that only made him irritable. Now his eyes expressed a rare pleasure. What, oh, what could this secret business be?

(So much for what I imagined to be the "Psychology of Anastasia" at this moment. To return to myself.)

I was certainly getting a great deal of fun out of my lessons. The change from book-making to machinery was a salutary one, and every day saw me more enthusiastic. There in the quiet roads of the Bois-de-Boulogne I practised turning and backing, accompanied by an instructor who controlled an extra set of brakes in case of accident. I was beginning to be very proud of myself, as I bowled around the Bois, and was even becoming conceited when one morning my professor said to me:

"To-morrow, Monsieur, you must come in the afternoon instead of the morning. Then we will drive along the Champs Elysée and the boulevards, for it is necessary you have some experience in handling the automobile in the midst of traffic. On the morning after, the Inspector will come to examine you for your certificate."

I was tremendously excited. Instead of rising early the following day I visibly astonished Anastasia by sleeping till ten o'clock. But after lunch I announced that I was going out and would not be back to supper.

I saw her face fall. Doubtless she thought: "His mysterious business has only been transferred from forenoon to afternoon. I thought this morning

when he did not get up it was finished. It seems only the hour is changed. But I will say nothing."

So she watched me from the window and I believe the position must have been getting on my nerves, for that afternoon, amid the bewildering traffic of Les Etoiles, I lost my head. Trying to avoid a hand-barrow, I crashed into a cab, and of course the emergency brakes refused to work. Considerable damage was done. There were two policemen taking down names, a huge crowd, much excited gesticulation. In the end I promised to call at the office of the cab proprietor and pay for the damage. Sadly I drove back to the garage. Never, I thought, should I pass my examination on the morrow. But my instructor cheered me up, and I began to look forward to it hopefully.

I arrived home trembling with excitement. I could hardly eat my supper, and rose soon after it was over.

"I've got an engagement this evening," I said nervously; "I may be late; don't wait up for me."

I was conscious how furtive and suspicious my manner was. I turned away to avoid her straight, penetrating gaze.

"Won't you tell me where you are going?" she said quietly.

"Oh, just out on business," I said irritably. "I have a matter to attend to."

With this illuminating information I went off. I had the impression that she was restraining herself with a great effort. Well, it was certainly trying.

I paid the proprietors of the cab a cheque for two hundred francs. Then it was necessary to go round and inform the police that everything had been settled. Then it seemed fit to promote a good feeling all round by ordering a bottle of champagne. Then one must drink to my success as a chauffeur in another bottle. When I reached home it was after midnight and I was terribly tired. The excitement of the

day had worn me out; and, besides, there was the worry over the examination in the morning. The wine, too, had made me very drowsy.

Anastasia lay silent on her bed. She did not move as I entered so I supposed she slept. Making as little noise as possible, I undressed. As I blew out the candle my last impression was of the exceeding cosiness of our little room. Particularly I noted our new dressing table of walnut, the armoire with mirror doors, and the fresh curtains of cream cretonne with a design of roses. "It's home," I thought, "and how glad I am to get back to it!" Then I crept between the sheets, and feeling as if I could sleep for ever and ever, I launched into a troubled sea of dreams.

* * * * * *

"What's the matter?"

It seemed as if someone was shaking me furiously. Opening my eyes I saw that it was Anastasia.

"What is it? Fire? Burglars?" I exclaimed. I had always made up my mind in the case of the latter I would lock the bedroom door and interview them through the keyhole. I am not a coward, but I have a very strongly developed sense of self-preservation.

"No, no; something more serious than that," she answered in a choking voice.

"What then? Are you sick?"

"Yes, yes, sick of everysing. I waken you up because you talk in your sleep."

"Do I? Seems to me you needn't waken me up just for that. What was I saying?"

"Saying? You talk all the time about *her*."

"Her? Who?"

"Oh, do not try to deceive me any more. I know all."

"You know more than I do," I said, astonished. "What do you mean?"

"Oh, do I not know you have a *maitresse?*

Do I not know you go to see her every day? Do I not know you are spending all your money with her? For two weeks have I borne it, seeing you go every day to keep your shameful assignations with her. Though it was almost driving me mad I have said no word. Hoping that you would tire of her, that you would come back to me, I have tried to bear it patiently. Oh, I have borne so much! But when it comes to lying by your side, and hearing you cry out and murmur expressions of love for her, I can bear it no longer. Please excuse me for waking you, but you torture me so."

I stared. This was an Anastasia altogether new to me. Her voice had a strange note of despair. Where had I heard it before? Ah! that night on the Embankment, when she was such a hunted, desperate thing. Never had I heard it since. Yet I knew the primal passion which lies deep in every woman had awakened. I was silent, and no doubt my silence seemed like guilt. But the fact was—her accusation had been launched in tumultuous French, and I was innocently trying to translate it into English.

"What was I saying?" I said at last.

"Oh, you cry all night, 'Mignonne! Mignonne! Petite Mignonne!' You say: 'You are love; you are darleen.' And sometimes you say: 'You are cute little sing.' What is 'cute little sing'? Somesing very *passionnante* I know. You have nevaire call me zat. And nevaire since we marry you call me Mignonne."

Suddenly it all burst upon me, and I laughed. It did not strike me how utterly heartless my laugh must have sounded.

"So that's it. You've found out all about Mignonne?"

"Yes, yes. Who is this petite Mignonne? I kill her. I kill myself. Tell me who she is. I go to her. I beg her not to take you from me. I 'ave

you first. You belong to me. No one shall 'ave you but me. Tell me who she is."

"I cannot tell you," I said, avoiding her gaze.

"Zen it is true? You have *maîtresse?* You have deceive me! Oh, what a poor, poor girl I am! Oh, God, help me!"

She was sobbing bitterly. Now, I am so constituted that though I am keenly sensitive to stage sobs and book sobs, domestic sobs only irritate me. Outside I can revel in sentiment, but at home I seem to resent anything that goes beyond the scope of every-day humdrum. I am tear-proof (which is often a mighty good thing for a husband); so my only answer was to pull the blankets over my head, and say in a rough voice:

"For goodness sake, shut up and let's have a little sleep."

But there was going to be no sleep for me that night, and to have one's sleep invaded would make a lamb spit in the face of a lion.

"Are you going to see her to-morrow?" she demanded tragically.

"Yes," I said, with a disgusted groan. Really the whole thing was becoming too ridiculous. All along I had been irritated at her jealousy, the more so as there had been certain grounds for it. It had been the only fault I had found with her, and often I had been stung to the point of protest. Now all my pent-up resentment surged to the surface.

"Oh, please, darleen, excuse me; please say you won't go. Stay wiz your leetle wife, darleen."

"I've got to go; it's important."

"Promise me zen you shall see her for the last time. Promise me you'll say good-bye."

"I can't promise that."

"You love her?"

"Ye—es. I love her."

My mind was made up. There is no cure for jealousy like ridicule. It would be a little hard, but

I would keep the thing up for another day. I would let matters come to a climax, then I would triumphantly drive round on my little voiturette and say, pointing to the blue and gold name plate :

' There ! Allow me to introduce to you ' Little Mignonne.' "

The whirl of the alarm-clock put an end to my efforts to get some sleep, so up I sprang in by no means the best of tempers. My examination at nine, and I had had a wretched night.

Anastasia got up meekly to prepare the coffee. I ate without saying a word, while she even excelled me in the eloquence of her silence. Never eating a mouthful, she sat there with her hands clasped in her lap, her eyes downcast. She seemed to be restraining herself very hard. The domestic atmosphere was decidedly tense.

At last I rose and put on my coat.

" Then you're going ? " she said breathing hard.

" Yes, I'm going."

At that her pent-up passion burst forth. She tried in French :

" If you go to her, if you see that woman again, I never want you to come back. I never want to see you again. You can go for ever."

" You forget," I said, " this is my house."

She bowed her head. " Yes, you are right. I am nothing in it but a housekeeper you do not have to give wages to, a convenience for you. But that will be all right ; I will go."

I shrugged my shoulders. " Really, you're too absurd."

Suddenly she came to me and threw her arms around me, looking frantically into my eyes.

" Tell me, tell me, do you not love me ? "

I softly unloosened her grasp. An actress on the stage can do justice to these emotional scenes. In real life, a little woman in a peignoir, with hair dishevelled, only makes a hash of them.

" Really," I said with some annoyance, " I wish you would cease to play the injured wife. You're saying the very things I've been putting into the mouths of my characters for the last five years. They don't seem real to me."

" Tell me. Do you love me ? "

" Why verge on the sentimental ? Have I ever, since we were married, been guilty of one word of love towards you ? "

" You have not."

" Yet we have been happy—at least I have. Then let us go on like sensible, married people and take things for granted."

" If you do not love me, why did you marry me ? "

" Well, you know very well why. I married you because having saved you from a watery grave, I was to a certain extent responsible for you. It was up to me to do something, and it seemed to be the easiest way out of the difficulty."

" Was that all ? "

" No, perhaps not all. I wanted someone to cook for me. You know how I loathe eating at restaurants."

" Then you did not learn to care for me afterwards ? "

" Why as to that I never stopped to consider. Really it never occurred to me. I was quite happy and contented. And I had my work to think of. You know that takes all emotional expression out of me."

" And now you love this Mignonne ? "

" Hum ! Ye-es, I love Petite Mignonne."

" Oh, I cannot bear it ! I have come to love you so much. Try, try, to geeve her up, darleen. It will keel me if you do not."

Here she sank on her knees, holding on to the skirts of my coat.

" I—It's too late to give her up now."

" Then, you're going ? " She still clung to me.

I disengaged myself. "Yes, I'm going."

She rose to her feet. She was like a little Sarah Bernhardt, all passion, tragic intensity.

"Then go! shameful man. Go to the woman you love. I never want to see you again. But know that you have broken my heart! Know that however happy you may be there is never more happiness for me!"

With these words ringing in my ears I closed the door behind me. Poor little girl! Well, it was tough on her, but she must really learn to curb that emotional temperament. And after all, it was only for a few hours more. I would show her how foolish she had been, and she would for ever after be cured of jealousy. With this thought I hurried off to my examination.

I found the Inspector to be a most genial individual who desired nothing more than that I should pass; so, profiting by my mishap of the day previous, I acquitted myself to admiration. Elated with success, I was returning merrily home when suddenly I remembered the domestic cloud of the morning. My conscience pricked me. Perhaps after all I had been a little harsh. Perhaps in the heat of the moment I had said things I did not mean. Well, she had never resented anything of the kind before. By the time I reached home she would have forgotten all about it. I would hear her hurried run to the door to greet me. "Hello! Little Thing," I would say. And then she would kiss me, just as lovingly as ever. Oh, I was so confident of her desperate affection!

But, as I reached the door, there was an ominous stillness within.

"She is trying to frighten me," I thought; yet my hand trembled as I put the key in the lock.

"Hello, Little Thing!"

No reply. A silence that somehow sickened me; then a sudden fear. Perhaps I would find her dead,

killed by her own hand in a moment of despair. But, as I hurriedly hunted the rooms, the sickening feeling vanished, for nowhere could I find any trace of her. The breakfast things were on the table just as I had left them. Everything was the same . . . yet stay ! there was a note addressed to me.

Again that deadly sickness. I could scarce tear open the envelope. There was a long letter written in French in an unsteady hand, and blurred with many tears. Here is what I read :

" I am leaving your house, where I am only in the way. Now you may bring your Mignonne or anyone else you wish. I would not stand for a moment between you and your happiness.

" For a long time I have felt keenly your coldness and indifference, but I have suffered it because I thought it was due to the difference of race between us. Now that I know you do not love me, I can remain no longer. I do not think you will ever make anyone happy. You are too selfish. Your work is like a vampire. It sucks away all your emotions, and leaves you with no feeling for those who love you.

" I have tried to please you, to make you care for me, and I have failed. I can try no more. You will never see me again, for I am going away. I feel I cannot make you happy, and I do not want to be a drag on you. You must not fear for me. I can work for a living, as I did before. Do not try to seek me out. I am leaving Paris. You can get a divorce very easily, then you can marry some one more worthy of you. I will always love you, and bless you and bless you. For the last time,

" Your heartbroken WIFE."

I sat down and tried to collect my thoughts. I turned to the letter and read it again. No ; there

it was, pitilessly plain I was paralysed, crushed by an immense self-pity. In fiction I would have made the deserted husband tear his hair, and cry, "Curse her; Oh, curse her!" Then tear her picture down from the wall, and fall sobbing over it. If there had been a child to cling to him it would have been all the more effective. But this was reality. I did none of these things. I lit a cigarette.

"Well, if that's not the limit!" I cried. "Who'd have thought she'd have so much spirit. But she'll come back. Of course she'll come back."

So I sat down to await her home-coming, but oh! the house was very sad and still and lonely! Never before had I realised how much her presence in it had meant to me. I made some tea and ate some bread and butter, and that night I went to bed very early and did not sleep at all. Next morning I made some more tea and ate some more bread and butter, but I did not wash any dishes. I was too sad to do that.

The next day crawled past in the same lugubrious way. I went to the police and reported her disappearance, and they began to search for her. I approached the Morgue to make daily inquiries with fear and trembling. I spent my days in looking for her. Everyone sympathized with me, as, wan and woe-begone, I wandered round the Quarter. I did not speak of my trouble, but the whole world seemed to know, and the general opinion seemed to be that she had gone off with some other man. They hinted at this, and advised me to forget her.

"I can't forget her," I cried to myself. "I never dreamed she meant so much to me. Over and over again I live the time we spent together. Looking back now, it seems so happy, the happiest time in my life. And to be separated all through a wretched misunderstanding!"

And every night I would sit all alone in the apartment, brooding miserably, and hoping every moment

to hear a knock at the door, and to find that she had come back to me. But as time went on this hope faded. Once, when I saw them fishing a drowned girl out of the Seine, I had a moment of terrible fear. There in the boat it lay, a dripping, carrion thing, and with a thousand others I pressed to peer. With relief, I saw that the cadavre had fair hair.

I began to write again, but the old, gay, whimsical spirit had gone out of me, and in its place was one of bitterness. Yet I was prospering amazingly. *Tom, Dick and Harry* was selling among the popular books in the American market, and it looked as if the new book was going to be equally successful. Already had I received a royalty cheque for three thousand dollars, and I had spent most of it in hiring private detectives to search for Anastasia. For six months I believed I looked the most wretched man in Paris. You see, I was playing the part of the Deserted Husband as splendidly as I had played all my other parts. Yet never did I fail to minutely analyse and record my feelings, and even in my blackest woe I seemed to find a somewhat Byronic satisfaction. Never did I cease to be the egotistic artist.

But all my searchings were vain. The girl seemed to have disappeared as if the Seine had swallowed her. I was wasting my life in vain regrets, so after six months had gone I put my affairs into the hands of a divorce lawyer, and having fulfilled all the requirements of French law, I sailed for America.

CHAPTER X

PRINCE OF DREAMERS

I WAS lucky in getting a state-room on the *Gargantuan*, and on reading over the list of passengers I saw a name that seemed vaguely familiar, Miss B. Tevandale. Where had I heard it before?

Then my memory sluggishly prompted me. Wasn't there a Miss Boadicea Tevandale who had played some part in my life? Oh, Irony! when we recall our past loves and have difficulty in remembering their names!

For the first two days the weather was very unsettling, and I decided that I would better sustain my dignity by remaining in my cabin. On the third, however, I ventured on deck, and there sure enough I saw a Junoesque female striding mannishly up and down. Yes, it was Boadicea. She was looking exasperatingly fit—I had almost written *fat*; but really, she seemed to have grown positively adipose.

"Miss Tevandale."

"Mr. Madden."

"Why, you look wretched," she said, after the first greetings were over.

"Yes; I'm a little seedy," I answered wanly. "Haven't quite got my sea-legs yet. But you seem a good sailor?"

"Aggressively so. But where have you been all this time? What wild, strange land has been claiming you? All the world wondered. It seemed as if you had dropped off the earth."

"I've been concealing myself in the heart of civilization. And you? I thought you would have been Mrs. Jarraway Tope by now."

"Why! Didn't you get my letter? I wrote just

after you left to say that I had broken off my engagement.

" No, ; the letter never reached me. I suppose it got side-tracked somewhere. So you didn't marry Jarraway after all. Well, well, it's a funny world."

" You don't seem tremendously excited at the news."

" Ah ! You want me to ask why you broke it off. I beg your pardon. I did not think I had the right to ask that."

" If you have no right, who has ? "

" I—I don't quite understand."

" Don't you remember the words you said when last we met ? "

I blush to say I did not remember, but I answered emotionally :

" Yes; they are engraven on my memory for ever."

" Then can you wonder ? "

" You don't mean to say it was on my account you broke off your marriage with a millionaire ? "

She answered me with a shade of bitterness.

" Listen, Horace ; there need be no mincing of matters between us two. Since I saw you last, I have been greatly interested in Woman's Suffrage. In fact I have been devoting myself body and soul to the Cause. Even now I am returning from a series of meetings in England, which I attended as a delegate from New York, and mixing with these noble-minded women has completely cured me of that false modesty that so handicaps our sex. I believe now that it is a woman's privilege, just as much as a man's, to declare her affection. Horace, I love you. I have always loved you from that day Will you be my husband ? "

I grew pale. I hung my head. My lips trembled.

" Boadicea," I faltered, " I cannot. It is too late. I am already married."

I saw the strong woman shrink as if she had received a blow. Then quickly she recovered herself.

"How was it? Tell me about it," she said quickly.

So there, as we watched the rolling of the whale-grey sea and each billow seemed part of a cosmic conspiracy to upset my equilibrium, I told her the story of Anastasia's desertion.

"Of course," I said brokenly, "I'll never see her again. In fact, even now I am sueing for a divorce. In a few months I expect to be a free man."

"My dearest friend, you have my sympathy."

Under the cover of our rugs I felt her strong capable hand steal to meet mine. Here was a fine, lofty soul who could solace and understand me. This big, handsome woman, with the cool, crisp voice, with the clear, calm eye, with the features of confidence and command, was surely one on whom a heartbroken world-weary man could lean a little in his hour of weakness and trouble. I returned the pressure of that large firm hand, and, moved by an emotion I could no longer suppress, I turned and dived below.

There is no matchmaker like the Atlantic Ocean; and so as the days went on I grew more and more taken with the idea of espousing Boadicea. As we sat there in our steamer chairs and watched the shrill wind whip the billow peaks to spray, and the sudden rainbows gleam in the silvery spendrift, I listened to her arguments in favour of the Suffrage and they seemed to me unanswerable. I, too, became inspired with a fierce passion to devote my life to the Cause, to enter and throw myself in the struggle of sex, to play my humble part in the Woman's War. And in Boadicea I had found my Joan of Arc.

So as we shook hands on the New York pier we had every intention of seeing one another again.

"You have helped me greatly with your noble sympathy," I said.

"You have cheered me greatly with your splendid understanding," she answered.

"We are comrades."

"Yes, we are good comrades—in the Cause."

She had to go West on a lecturing tour, and it was some months before I saw her again. When I did, my first words were:

"Boadicea, I'm a free man."

"Are you? How does it feel?"

"Not at all natural. I don't believe I'll ever be satisfied till I'm chained to the car again. Boadicea, do you remember those words you spoke that day we met on the *Gargantuan*? Does your proposition still hold good?"

"What proposition?"

"Let us unite our forces. Let us fight side by side. Boadicea, will you not change your name to Madden? You know my sad history. Here then I offer you the fragments of my heart."

"Oh, don't. You make me feel like a cannibal."

"Here then I offer you my hand and name. I will try to make you the most devoted of husbands."

"I am sure you will. Horace, we will work together for the good of the Cause."

A month after, we were married and spent our honeymoon in London, chiefly in attending Suffragette meetings. Very soon I began to discover that being wedded to a woman who is wedded to a Cause is like being the understudy of your wife's husband. And if that rather militant suffragette happens to be a millionairess then one's negligibility is humiliatingly accentuated. I was only a millionaire in francs, while Boadicea was a millionairess in dollars, and the disparity of value in national currency began to become more and more a painful fact to me.

I was not long, too, in dicovering that my sympathy with the Cause was only skin deep. Indeed, my suddenly discovered enthusiasm had surprised even myself. It was unlike me to become so interested in real, vital questions, that more than once I suspected myself of being a hypocrite. At long

distance the idea of Woman finding herself fascinated me just as socialism fascinated me. I could dream and idealize and let my imagination paint wonderful pictures of a woman's world, but once the matter became concrete, my enthusiasm took wings. Then it was I had my first tiff with Boadicea.

"Boa, I don't want to march in the demonstration on Sunday," I said peevishly.

"Why not, Horace?" demanded Boadicea with displeasure.

"Oh, well, I don't like the male suffragettes. They look so like fowls. They remind me of vegetarians or temperance cranks. Some of the fellows in the club chaffed me awfully the last time I marched with them."

"Oh, very well, Horace. Please yourself. Only I'm just a *little* disappointed in you."

"I wouldn't mind so much," I went on, "if the women were inspiring, but they're not. In the last demonstration I couldn't help remarking that nearly all the women who marched were homely and unattractive, while those who watched the procession were often awfully pretty and interesting. Now, couldn't you reverse the thing—let the homely ones line up and let the pretty ones march? Then I'd venture to bet you'd convert half the men on the spot."

Boadicea stared. This was appalling heresy on my part; but I went on bravely.

"Another thing: why don't they dress better? Do they think that the inspiration of a great cause justifies them in being dowdy? I tell you, well-fitting corsets and dainty shoes will do more for the freedom of woman than all the argument in the world. Coax the Vote from the men; don't bully them. You'll get it if you're charming enough. Therein lies your real strength—not in your intellect, but in your charm."

"Don't tell me, Horace, you're like all the rest of

the men. A woman with a pretty face can turn you round her finger!"

"I'm sadly like most men, I find. I prefer charm and prettiness to character and intellect; just as in my youth I preferred bad boys to good. But, in any case, I refuse to march any more with these '*vieux tableaux*.' Remember I have a sense of humour."

"But all your enthusiasm? Your boiling indignation? Your thought of our wrongs?"

"Has all been overwhelmed by my sense of humour. One can only afford to take trivial things seriously, and serious things trivially."

"So you are going to throw us over?"

"Not at all. I believe in the Cause, but I won't march. The cause of woman would be all right if there were no women—I mean the chief enemy to women's suffrage is the suffragette. No woman has more influence than the French woman. It is all the more powerful because it is indirect. It is based on love. A French woman knows that to coax is better than to bully."

"Oh, you're always praising up the French women. Why don't you go over to Paris to live, if you are so fond of them?"

"I never want to set foot in Paris again."

"But what about me? I've never been there. Am I never to see it?"

"No; I don't think you would like it."

"I think I would. I think we'd better go over there for the Spring."

Any opposition on my part made her determined, so that if I wanted a thing very much I had to pretend the very opposite. On the other hand, if I had expressed a keen wish to go to Paris she would have objected strenuously. Her nature was very antagonistic. I admired her greatly for her intellect, for her character; but she was one of those self-possessed, logical, clear-brained women who get on

your nerves, and every day she was getting more and more on mine.

We took an Italian Palace near the Parc Monceau, bought a limousine, kept a dozen servants, moved in the Embassy crowd and had our names in the Society Column of the New York paper nearly every day. Life became one beastly nuisance after another—luncheons, balls, dinners, theatre parties. I, who had a Bohemian hatred of dressing, had to dress every evening. I, who dreaded making an engagement because it interfered with my liberty, found myself obliged to keep a book in which I recorded my too numerous engagements. I, who had so strenuously objected to the constraints of company, was obliged to force smiles and stroke people the right way for hours on end. Was there ever such a slavery? It seemed as if I never had a moment in which I could call my soul my own. I was bored, heart-sick, goaded to rebellion.

"Why can't we be simple, even if we are rich," I remonstrated. "It would be far less trouble and we'd be far happier. I'm tired of trying to live up to my valet. Let's cut out this society racket and live naturally."

"We can't. We must live up to our position. It's our duty. Besides, I like this 'society racket' as you so vulgarly call it. It gives me an opportunity to impress people with my views. And really, Horace, I think you're too ungrateful. You should be glad of the opportunity of meeting so many nice people."

"Like Hades I should! Do you call that Irish countess we had for lunch nice? She had a long face like a horse, blotched and covered with hair, and spoke with the accent of a washerwoman. And that stiff Englishman——"

"You can't deny Sir Charles is awfully good form."

"Good form be hanged! I think he's a pig-headed ass. I couldn't open my mouth without

treading on his traditional corns. American Spread-eagleism isn't in it with British Lionrampantism. We have a sense of humour that makes us laugh at our weaknesses, but the Englishman's are sacred. That Englishman actually believed that the masses were being educated beyond their station, believed that they should be kept in the place they belonged."

"Really you're disgustingly democratic. What's the use of having money if it doesn't make one better than other people who haven't? As for Sir Charles, I think he's perfectly charming."

"Oh, yes, of course. You're aping the English, like all the Americans who come over here. Everything's perfectly charming, or perfectly dreadful. You'll soon be ashamed of your own nationality. Bah! of all snobs the Anglo-American one's the most contemptible. Of all poses the cosmopolitan one's the most disgusting."

"Really your language is rather strong."

"It's going to be stronger before I'm finished. I've been sitting quiet in my little corner taking notes on you and your friends and I've got the stuff for a book out of our little splurge in society. There's a good many of your friends in it, Madam. I fear they'll cut you dead after they read it."

"If you publish such a work I'll get a divorce."

"Go and get one."

"Oh, you're a brute, a brute!"

Here Boadicea stamped a number six shoe furiously on the floor.

"Yes, and I'm glad of it. To woman's duplicity let us men oppose our brutality. When the worst comes to the worst we can always fall back on the good old system of 'spanking.'"

"Oh! Oh! You dare not. You are not physically capable."

"Is that so? You're a strong woman, Boa; but I still think I could use the flat of a nice broad slipper on you."

She was speechless with wrath. Then, with another exclamation of "brute," she marched from the room. Soon after I heard her order the car and go out.

"Yes," I murmured bitterly to my cigarette, "seems like you'd caught a Tartar this time. Aren't you sorry you ever married again? How different it was before. Let's see. What's on to-night?"

My little book showed me that I was due to dine with an ambassador.

"What a nuisance! I've got to dress. I've got to stoke my physical machine with food that isn't suited to it. I've got to murmur inanities to some underdressed female. How I hate it all! There was my old grandfather now. He died leaving a million, but up to his death he lived as simply as the day he began working for wages. Ah! there was a happy man. I remember when he used to come home for supper at night they would bring him two bowls, one full of hot mashed potatoes, the other of sweet, fresh milk. He would eat with a horn spoon, taking it half full of potatoes, then loading up with milk. And how he enjoyed it! What a glorious luxury it would be to sit down to-night to a bowl of potatoes and a bowl of milk!"

I stared drearily round the great room which we had sub-let from the mistress of a Grand Duke. Such lavish luxury of mirror and marble, of silk and satin-wood, furnished by an artist to satisfy an epicure! Sumptuous splendour I suppose you would call it. But oh, what would I not give to be back once more in the garret of the rue Gracieuse! Aye, even there, with its calico curtains and its home-made furniture. Or sitting down to a dinner of roast chicken and *Veuve Amiot* with . . . Oh, I can't bear to mention even her name! The thought of her brings a choke to my throat and a mist to my eyes. . . How happy I was then, and

I didn't know it! And how good she was! just a good little girl. I didn't think half enough of her. What a mistake it's all been!"

I stared at the burnt out cigarette, reflecting bitterly.

"I should never have come back to this Paris. It just makes me unhappy. At every turn of the street I expect to suddenly come face to face with her. I can't bear to visit the *rive gauche*. It's haunted for me. I see myself as I was then, swinging my old cherrywood cane as I strode so buoyantly along the quays. Every foot of that old Latin Quarter has its memory. I can't go there again. It's too painful."

I rose and paced up and down the room.

"God! wasn't I happy though! Remember the afternoons in the Luxembourg and the Bal Bullier, and the Boul' Mich'. How I loved it all! How I used to linger gazing at the old houses! How I used to dream and thrill, and gladden! Oh, the wonder of the Seine by night, the work, the struggle, the visits to the Mont-de-Piété, the careless God-given Bohemian days! It hurts me now to think of them. . . . It hurts me. . . ."

Going over to the mantelpiece I leaned one elbow on it, looking down drearily at the fire.

"Ah, Little Thing! How glad she always was when I came home! I can feel her arms round my neck as she welcomed me, feel her soft kisses, see the little room all bright and cheery. Oh, if these days would only come again! Where is she now I wonder? Poor, poor Little Thing."

As I stood there like a man stricken, miserable beyond all words, suddenly I started. All the blood seemed to leave my heart. Someone was talking to the butler in the hall.

"Is Madam in, please? I have bring some leetle *hem-broderie* she want see. She tell me to come now."

Just a tired, quiet, colourless voice, interrupted by a sudden cough, yet oh, how sweet, how heaven-sweet to me! Again I listened.

"Oh, she have gone out. I am so sorry. She have made appointment wiz me for now and I have not much time. I will leave my *hem-broderie* for Madam to regard. Then I will call again to-morrow."

She was going, but I could not restrain myself.

"Thomas," I said to the man, "call her back. I will make a selection of her work for Madam."

As I stood there by the mantelpiece with head bent, waiting, I saw in the mirror the crimson curtains parted, and there stood a little, grey figure, shrinking, shabby, surprised. Then I turned slowly and once again we were face to face.

"Little Thing!"

She started. Her hand in its shabby, cotton glove went up to her throat, and she made a step as if she would throw herself in my arms.

"You?"

"Yes," I said miserably. "I never thought to see you again."

"And I did not sink I evaire see you. It would have been better not."

"It would; but I'm glad, I'm glad."

"Yes, I am glad too, for I want to say how sorry I am I leave you like that. I was mad wiz jealousy. I could not help it. After, I want very much keel myself, but I have promised you I do not."

"No, no, it was my fault. I could have explained everything so easily. But after all, it's too late. What does it matter now?"

"No, it does not mattaire much now. I am so glad for you you have got divorce from me. I am very bad womans. Please excuse me."

"Yes, yes; but forgive me. I never cared enough for you—or at least I never showed I cared. Now I know."

"You care now? Oh, that will make me so

happy. You know there is not much longer for me. The doctor tell me so. I am *poitrinaire*."

She shrugged her shoulders with a resigned little grimace.

"But," she went on, "now I shall be so glad. I don't care for myself. You remember for laughing you used to call me 'Poor leetle Sing,' and I say: 'No, I am not poor leetle sing, I am very, very 'appy leetle sing.' Ah! but now I am poor leetle sing indeed."

"Can I not help you? I must."

"No I will take nussing from you. And anyway it would not help much. I make enough from my *hem-broderie* to leeve, and I don't want any pleasure some more. Just to leeve. The sisters at the convent are very good to me. I see them often, and when I am sick at the last I know they will care for me. Really I am very well. Now I must go; I must work; I lose time."

"Oh, for Heaven's sake, let me do something!"

"No, I am very good. I sink at you always, and I bless you. You see I have good souvenirs."

From the breast of her threadbare jacket she took a worn silver locket and showed me a little snapshot of myself.

"There, I have the souvenir of happy days. Now I must go."

She looked very frail, and of a colour almost transparent. She tried hard to smile. Then she swayed as if she would faint, but recovered herself by clutching at a chair.

"Little Thing," I said, "it's too late, but we must at least shake hands."

She pulled off a grey cotton glove and held out a hand all toilworn and needle-warped.

"Good-bye," she said wearily.

I seized the little thin hand, conscious that my hot tears were falling on it. Looking up, I saw that her eyes too were a-stream with tears.

"Good-bye," I said chokingly.

"Good-bye, darleen, good-bye for evaire . . ."

That was all. She turned and left me standing there. I heard her coughing as she went downstairs. Sinking down I sobbed as if my heart would break. . .

* * * * * *

"What's the mattaire, darleen?"

It seemed as if someone was shaking me violently. My pillow was wet with tears and the sobs still convulsed me. I opened staring eyes, eyes that fell *on a dressing table of walnut, an armoire with mirror doors, and cretonne curtains, with a design of little roses.* Yet I stared more, for Anastasia, fresh and dainty, but with a face of great concern, was bending over me.

"What's the mattaire darleen? For ten minutes I try to wake you up. You have been having bad dream. You cry dreadful."

"Dream! Dream! Am I mad? . . . Where am I now? . . . Tell me quick."

"Oh, darleen, what's the mattaire? You affrighten me . . ."

"No, no; what's the address of this house?"

"Passage d'Enfer."

"And the date . . .? What's the date?"

"The twelve Novembre."

"But the year, the year?"

"Why the year is Nineteen hundred thirteen."

"Thank God! I thought it was nineteen fourteen."

Then the whole truth flashed on me. Prince of Dreamers! In a night I had dreamed the events of a whole year of life. Yesterday was the day of my accident, and this morning—why, I had to pass my examination for a chauffeur's licence; this morning at nine o'clock, and it was now eleven. Too late.

Yet I did not care then for a thousand Inspectors. I was not married to Boadicea. I still had Little Thing. I vow I was the happiest man in the world.

"Pack everything up," I said. "We leave for America to-morrow."

* * * * * *

Once more I sat in the favourite chair of my favourite club, surveying the incredible bank book. Figures! Figures! More formidably than ever they loomed up. Useless indeed to try and cope with this flood of fortune.

And now that I had two reputations to keep up, the flood was more insistent than ever. Not only were there the best-sellers of Norman Dane to bargain with, but also the best-sellers of Silenus Starset. And for my own modest needs, with Anastasia's careful management, my little patrimony more than sufficed. What then was I going to do with these senseless figures that insisted so in piling up, and yet meant nothing to me? Suddenly the solution flashed on me, and as if it were an illuminated banner I saw the words:

JAMES HORACE MADDEN, PHILANTHROPIST.

That was it. This wonderful gift of mine that made the acquisition of money so easy, what should I do with it but exercise it for the good of humanity?

Yes, I would be a philanthropist; but on whom could I philanthrope?

The answer was easy. Who better deserved my help than my fellow-scribes who had failed, those high and delicate souls who had scorned to commercialize their art, who were true to themselves and fought for all that was best in literature? Even as there was a home for old actors, so I would found one for old authors, battered, beaten veterans of the pen, who in their declining years would find rest, shelter, sympathy under a generous roof.

Yes, writing popular fiction had become a habit with me, almost a vice. I was afraid I could never give it up. But here would be my extenuation

The money the public gave me for pleasing them I would spend on those others who, because they were artists, failed to please. And in this way at least I would indirectly be of some use to literature.

Then again; what a splendid example it would be to my brother best-seller makers, turning out their three books a year and their half-dozen after they are dead. Let them too, show their zeal for literature by devoting the bulk of their ill-gotten gains to its encouragement.

The club had changed very little. I saw the same members, looking a little more mutinous about the waist line. There was Vane and Quince, qualifying perhaps for my home. I greeted them cordially, aglow with altruism. After all, it was a day of paltry achievement, we were all small men, and none of us weighed on the scale. I felt very humble indeed. Quince had been right. I would never be one of those writers whom all the world admires—and doesn't read. Truly I was one of the goats.

But that night at dinner in the Knickerbocker I threw back my head and laughed. And Anastasia in a new evening gown looked at me in surprise and demanded what was the matter. I surveyed her over a brimming glass of champagne.

"Extraordinary thing," I thought; "isn't it absurd? I'm actually falling in love with my own wife."

THE END

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